

3: HESIOD AND GREEK MYTH

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*For the goats of Nahunta's hill,
My sometime Muses unawares.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in the second century BC, the Roman playwright Lucius Accius advanced the case – as reported, though disapprovingly, by Aulus Gellius in his *Attic Nights* 3.11.3–5¹ – that Hesiod's work had preceded that of Homer. Accius based his argument on what he deemed to be certain Homeric assumptions predicated upon Hesiodic revelation. Modern scholarship, while commonly assigning Hesiod to Homer's eighth century BC, more typically – though not universally² – reverses Accius' relative chronological ordering.

Whether it be something approaching a real-world life description or, as a number of scholars are now more inclined to advocate, only the construction of a literary persona, a biographic sketch of the poet named Hesiod has emerged from antiquity – chiefly gleaned from the works attributed to him.³ His father is said to have been a native of the Aeolian port city of Cyme on the northwest coast of Asia Minor. Economic deprivation led the father to resettle in Greece – in the Boeotian village of Ascra, lying in Mt. Helicon's Valley of the Muses – the place that Hesiod would call home. The poet Hesiod presents himself as a herder and farmer – indeed, he tells that it was while he shepherded his flock on the slopes of Mt. Helicon that the Muses came to him and first inspired him with poetic art.

Whatever we make of him biographically, Hesiod and his poems undeniably occupy a seminal position in the history of Greek mythic

tradition. Not only does the epic poet called Hesiod stand at the onset of the literary recording of that tradition, but also, of all ancient authors, it is this Hesiod whose word-weaving reveals to us most clearly the warp and woof of that tapestry that Greek myth is. Two well-preserved epic poems are attributed to him – the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* – and these will occupy most of our attention in the pages that ensue.

There is a third work, likewise well-preserved, to which the name Hesiod has been attached since antiquity – to wit, the *Shield of Heracles*, a poem about the strongman Heracles, the design of his fabulous shield (seemingly influenced by Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18 [or both influenced by some other, unattested, tradition(s)]), and his combat with Cycnus, a notorious robber and son of Ares. Many present-day scholars, however, consider this work to be the product of a somewhat later and less talented literary hand.

Yet if we are inclined to view “Hesiod” in terms of literary persona and, more than that, as a poet whose works experienced myriad shift-ings (recompositions) in oral performance, works that evolved as their performance was taken up by increasingly farther-flung performers – becoming Panhellenic⁴ – then the evaluation of the “authenticity” of the *Shield* takes on new nuances. Nagy's observations in this regard are instructive and illuminating:

With the important added factor of pan-Hellenic diffusion, the successive recompositions of Hesiodic poetry could in time become ever less varied, more and more crystallized, as the requirements of composition became increasingly universalized. Of course the rate of such crystallization, and even the date, could have been different in each poem or even in different parts of the same poem. From this point of view, we can in principle include as Hesiodic even a composition like the *Shield of Heracles*, though it may contain references to the visual arts datable to the early sixth century. Scholars are too quick to dismiss this poem as not a genuine work on the basis of the dating alone, and then it becomes all the easier for them to underrate its artistic qualities on the grounds that it is merely an imitation of Hesiod.⁵

For all too pragmatic reasons having to do with paper and ink, however, the *Shield of Heracles* will be excluded from examination in the present

work. Other poems that have been assigned Hesiodic authorship – poems less well preserved – will be encountered in passing in the discussions that follow.

THE *THEOGONY*

Whence each of the gods came into existence, or whether all of them existed for all time, and what sort of form they had, the Greeks did not know until recently – “just yesterday or the day before”, so to speak – for I suppose that the time of Hesiod and Homer was four hundred years before my own – and no more than that. It was they who taught the Greeks of the genealogy of the gods (*theogoniē* [θεογονίη]) and who gave to the gods their names, specified their honors and skills, and revealed their forms.

Herodotus 2.53

Hesiod's *Theogony* – as the historian Herodotus tells us – is a tale of the “genealogy of the gods.” It was perhaps long after Hesiod's own day that the poem acquired the phylogenetic title by which we know it – in the Hellenistic era, a nomenclatural contribution of the Alexandrian scholars.⁶ Regardless, it is indeed a work about origins, and no less a cosmogony (an account of the origin of the cosmos) than a theogony.

Hesiod's is not, however, the only *Theogony* known from ancient Greece. Theogonies and cosmogonies, composed in verse or prose, are attributed to several literati dating from the seventh century BC on. The earliest of these are preserved in fragments, if at all.⁷ Especially significant is the theogonic tradition associated with Orpheus, earliest preserved in a remarkable document called the Derveni papyrus, a carbonized scroll recovered from the remains of a Macedonian funeral pyre, “our oldest surviving Greek manuscript.”⁸ The composition of the papyrus text appears to date to the late fifth century BC, but the Orphic theogony that it reports can probably be assigned to the sixth century.⁹

In the section that ensues, we will examine the structure and content of Hesiod's *Theogony* in some detail. There are fundamentally three reasons for lavishing this descriptive attention on the *Theogony* (and, to a lesser extent, on *Works and Days*). First, limitations of space and considerations of purpose necessarily prohibit the telling of most of the tales that constitute the primary source material for the interpretative essays

contained within this volume – but the reader is due some first-hand exposure. Second – and following on from the first – the tale here related may justifiably be labeled the most fundamental of all Greek mythic traditions – the starting point, as it were, for all that follows. And third, for discerning the formative elements and processes of Greek myth – to the extent we are able to do so – the structural details are crucial.

Structure and Content of the Theogony

Hesiod's epic song of emerging gods and cosmos forms a twisting genealogical tree within which are nested numerous mythic traditions, some rehearsed at length, some merely mentioned. The poem's 1022 lines¹⁰ unfold as follows.

Typical of early Greek performance poetry, the *Theogony* begins with a prefatory hymn (lines 1–115). The deities upon whom the poet calls in this instance are the Muses, goddesses of artistic inspiration, daughters of Zeus. Within this proem, Hesiod invokes the goddesses not once, but three times it seems: “Let us begin our singing with the Heliconian Muses, who possess the great and holy Mount Helicon” (lines 1–2); and then, as though after a false start, “O Hesiod, let us begin with the Muses, who hymning father Zeus on Olympus delight his great heart” (lines 36–7); and a third time, as he approaches the end of the proem, “Hail, children of Zeus, give me lovely song; praise the holy race of deathless gods who ever are” (line 104).¹¹

As the theogony proper begins, Hesiod sings of the appearance of the first of the primeval beings (lines 116–22). “At the very first, Chaos came to be”; the Greek term *Chaos* (Χάος) denotes a gaping void – in this context, she is a massive emptiness of dark. Next appear Gaea, the ‘Earth’; Tartarus, a murky nether space far beneath the earth; and Eros, ‘Desire’.

Both Chaos and Gaea then spontaneously produce offspring (lines 123, 126–32). From Chaos are born Erebus ‘Darkness’, and Nyx ‘Night’, (who in turn couple to produce Aether, the bright upper air, and Hemera ‘Day’; lines 124–25). Gaea gives birth to Uranus ‘Heaven’, Urea ‘Mountains’, and Pontus ‘Sea’.

Hesiod now shifts his attention to the great primeval couple Earth and Heaven – for Gaea has taken her first-born son, Uranus, to be her consort – and begins his narration (lines 133–210) of a myth of divine sovereigns who in succession are dethroned. The children that Gaea and Uranus produce are many and diverse, beginning with the twelve Titans: Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rhea,

Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys, and Cronus. Gaea then bears the three one-eyed Cyclopes and the three Hecatoncheires, hundred-armed and fifty-headed. But Uranus hates his children, and as they each are born he hides them away within the depths of Earth. Cronus comes to the aid of his mother, and brandishing a toothed sickle of adamant that Gaea has crafted, submissive to her schemes, Cronus emasculates his unsuspecting father, Uranus, as he prepares to have intercourse with Gaea. The blood that drips from the castrated Uranus impregnates Gaea, and she conceives the Erinyes, armored giants, and the tree nymphs called Meliae. Cronus tosses his father's severed genitals into the sea and from them will spring the goddess Aphrodite. With the emasculation of Uranus, Cronus moves to center stage as divine sovereign.

Hesiod returns to his genealogies. As Chaos had spontaneously produced offspring, now her daughter Nyx does likewise (lines 211–32). Among the fifteen children she bears – mostly fell creatures of dark and trouble – are numbered Cer 'Destiny', Geras 'Old Age', Moerae 'Fates', Nemesis 'Retribution', and Eris 'Strife', who herself parthenogenetically produces fifteen similar beings – such as Ponus 'Toil', Machae 'Wars', Pseudea 'Lies', and Horkus 'Oath' "who brings the greatest ruin to men on earth, when willingly they swear falsely." Gaea also takes her son Pontus as a consort; and together they produce Nereus, an "Old Man of the Sea," as well as Thaumais, Phorcys, Ceto, and Eurybia (lines 233–9).

A long heterogeneous section follows next, framed by the genealogy of the descendants of Nereus and his siblings (i.e., the children of Gaea and Pontus), into which are fitted fleeting references to mythic heroic deeds (lines 240–336). Nereus and Doris (one of the Oceanids; see below) produce fifty sea-nymph daughters, the Nereids, whom Hesiod names individually. Notable among the other descendants of Gaea and Pontus are those in the lineage of Phorcys (another "Old Man of the Sea") and his sister Ceto, who together produce monstrous offspring – the Graeae, Gorgons, and Echidna, among others – from whom, in turn, many more monsters and fantastic beings descend: Pegasus, Geryoneus, Orthus, the Hydra, and the Sphinx, to name but a few of those enumerated in this Catalog of Monsters (lines 270–336).

The poet now turns our attention back to the Titans (children of Gaea and Uranus), to their mating with one another (or with some other divine being), and to the offspring they produce (lines 337–452). Oceanus and Tethys produce sons, the rivers of the world, and 3,000 nymph daughters, the Oceanids. To Hyperion and Theia are born a son, Helios (the sun), and two daughters, Selene (the moon) and Eos (the dawn). Crius and Eurybia (daughter of Gaea and Pontus) have

children – Astraeus, Pallas, and Perses. Through the marriage of Eos and Astraeus, Hyperion/Theia and Crius/Eurybia possess grandchildren in common (among which are the winds, Zephyrus, Boreas, and Notus), as do Oceanus/Tethys and Crius/Eurybia through the marriage of Styx (an Oceanid) and Pallas. Here Hesiod briefly interrupts his genealogical strains to praise Styx and her children who will side with Zeus (not yet born) in his coming conflict with the Titans. An even briefer return to genealogy brings the record of the Titans Phoebe and Coeus' children – Leto and Asteria – and the latter's daughter by Perses, Hecate. The poet seizes upon the genealogical mention of Hecate to hymn her praises, and in thirty-eight lines sets out a remarkable theological description of the goddess – a beneficent deity providing many advantages to humankind, quite distinct from the threatening and infernal Hecate of a later period.¹²

“And Rhea submitted herself to Cronus and bore illustrious children”: Hestia; Demeter; “golden-sandaled” Hera; Hades, “whose heart knows no pity”; “loud-rumbling Earthshaker” (i.e., Poseidon); and Zeus, “father of gods and men” – so Hesiod continues with his Titanic genealogy and sets the stage for the second episode in his succession myth (lines 453–506). As Rhea births each of her children, Cronus swallows the infants, having been warned by Gaea and Uranus that his fate is to be overthrown by his progeny, just as Cronus himself had toppled his own father. But just before Rhea delivers Zeus, her sixth child, Gaea and Uranus assist her in slipping away to Crete. There Zeus is born and placed in Gaea's care, while Rhea presents to the expectant Cronus a stone wrapped in infants' clothing, which he promptly swallows, thinking he has ingested Rhea's newest babe. When Zeus is grown up (seemingly in a year's time), Gaea tricks Cronus into vomiting up the five swallowed children – as well as the stone, which Zeus sets up at Pytho as an object of veneration (in the second century AD, the Greek author Pausanias [10.24.6] writes of seeing the stone at Delphi and of how the Delphians anoint it with olive oil daily and drape raw wool over it at festival times). Zeus then releases his “father's brothers,” the Cyclopes, who had remained bound within earth, and in gratitude they present him with his distinctive weapon – thunder and lightning bolt.

Interrupting the succession myth, Hesiod briefly returns to genealogical strains to rehearse the offspring of the Titan Iapetus and his consort Clymene (an Oceanid) – Atlas, Menoetius, Prometheus, and Epimetheus – only to segue quickly into the tale of Prometheus, his deceit, and his fate (lines 507–616). Prometheus tries to trick Zeus

by setting out two portions of a sacrificed ox – one of bones and one of rich meat, but each disguised to hide the actual contents, the lesser portion of bones appearing more sumptuous, and vice versa. Crafty Prometheus invites Zeus to choose the portion he desires; the other will go to mortal men. Zeus, seemingly duped (actually not, says Hesiod) chooses the bones; in his anger at the deception, Zeus withholds fire from humankind. But fire will be provided to humans nonetheless – Prometheus steals it for them, carrying it off in a fennel stalk. As punishment for the theft, Zeus has Hephaestus create the first woman, Pandora (whom Hesiod names in *Works and Days*,¹³ not in *Theogony*), the matriarch of womankind and a great bane sent upon men, by Hesiod's misogynistic reckoning.

The poet switchbacks to his succession myth with the saga of the Titanomachy (lines 617–735). Hesiod's account begins in the tenth year of a war that Zeus and his siblings, the Olympians – “the gods, givers of good fortune,” (*theoi, dōtēres eaōn* [θεοί, δωτῆρες ἐάων]) – are waging against the “Titan gods” (*Titēnes theoi* [Τιτῆνες θεοί]). By Gaea's counsel, Zeus releases the Hecatoncheires – still locked away within earth – reviving them with nectar and ambrosia. These enter the melee on the side of the Olympians and, launching gigantic boulders with their hundred arms, pound Mt. Othrys, the citadel of the Titans. In near apocalyptic language, Hesiod describes how the attack of the Olympians, the counterattack of the Titans, and, most conspicuously, Zeus's unrestrained lightning-bolt bombardment shake creation to its core. The *coup de grâce* is delivered by the Hecatoncheires, whose barrage of 300 boulders brings the Titans to their knees and their fate – imprisonment beneath the earth in murky Tartarus, as far from earth as earth is from heaven (namely, that space through which a bronze anvil would plummet in ten days' time).

Hesiod's verses on the Titans' place of confinement provide a bridge to a long description of the Netherworld (lines 736–819).¹⁴ The poet tells, *inter alia*, of the alternating coming and going of Nyx 'Night' and Hemera 'Day' from that subterranean place; the children of Nyx who live therein and venture forth at night – Hypnos 'Sleep' and Thanatos 'Death'; and the hound, Cerberus, who guards the gates of Hades. Styx, river of the Netherworld, is here reintroduced, and the poet sings of her dread waters, by which the gods of Olympus swear their oaths (and the fate that befalls one who is untrue).

The Netherworld described, the poet returns to his narration of the Greek succession myth (lines 820–68). Tartarus fathers a child on Gaea – a monstrous hundred-headed dragon, Typhoeus. The creature

has been conceived in order to usurp Zeus, so that he might claim for himself the kingship “of immortals and mortals”; their combat is furious, rivaling (if not surpassing) that of the Titanomachy in cosmic intensity as Zeus unleashes the full force of his lightning attack. In the end, like the Titans before him, Typhoeus is vanquished and cast into Tartarus.

Hesiod then turns to a short description of a particular set of the progeny of Typhoeus: the ill winds (lines 869–80; of the monster’s multiheaded brood by Echidna – Orthus, Cerberus, the Lernaean Hydra, the Chimaera – Hesiod has already spoken [lines 304–22, a portion of the Catalog of Monsters]). Distinct from the favorable Zephyrus, Boreas, and Notus (the sons of Eos and Astraeus), these winds bring destruction on land and sea.

It is now, the poet recites, that the immortals – following the council of the seemingly fickle Gaea¹⁵ – prevail upon Zeus to reign over them as sovereign god (lines 881–5). So he does, dividing “their honors among them.” Here Hesiod must hint at a tradition similar to that one preserved by Homer (*Iliad* 15.187–93) – the cosmos (and honor) was divided by lot between Poseidon, Hades, and Zeus, who receive respectively the sea, the gloomy Netherworld, and the sky; all three share the earth and Olympus.¹⁶

With the succession myth all but completed, Hesiod segues again into genealogical strains, rehearsing the wives of the heavenly sovereign and their progeny (lines 886–929). Zeus’ first wife is Metis, an Oceanid. But with her mention, the theme of usurpation and succession again arises: warned by Gaea and Uranus that Metis would bear a daughter strong and wise like her father, and a son who would become *theōn basileus kai andrōn* (θεῶν βασιλεὺς καὶ ἀνδρῶν) ‘king of gods and men’ in his place, Zeus preemptively swallows Metis. The daughter, however, Metis already carries within her womb; and that girl-child – Athena – will be born from Zeus’ body, emerging from his head. Wife two by Hesiod’s accounting is the Titan Themis, and among the children she produces with Zeus are the Horae ‘Seasons’. Zeus’ third wife is another Oceanid, Eurynome; their daughters are the Charities (or Graces), beauty embodied. Demeter, Zeus’ sister, is his fourth wife; born to them is a daughter, Persephone. Zeus next weds Mnemosyne, and their children are the nine Muses. The twin deities Artemis and Apollo are borne by Zeus’ sixth wife, Leto. Last of all, Zeus takes Hera as his wife; their children are Hebe, Ares, Eileithyia, and Hephaestus (the last-named conceived parthenogenetically).

Passing through the section of the *Theogony* described immediately above, the reader is commonly said to cross into the literary domain of an author other than Hesiod. Many scholars have contended that some later poet or poets (pseudo-Hesiod(s)) have reworked or replaced the original ending of the poem.¹⁷ The exact location of the authorial boundary is, however, a matter of disagreement: West, for example, argues for drawing the line after the Metis passage (line 900); Northrup has contended for placing it at line 935.¹⁸ But again, Nagy's words are instructive:

Critics have also noticed that the conclusion of the *Theogony* at verses 901–1020 is formally and even stylistically distinct from the previous parts of the poem. But this part is also functionally distinct from the rest, and we may note in general that different themes in oral poetry tend to exhibit different trends in formal – even linguistic – development. To put it another way: different contexts are characterized by different language. An explanation along these lines is surely preferable to a favorite scenario of many experts, in which the *Theogony* was somehow composed by a combination of one Hesiod and a plethora of pseudo-Hesiods.¹⁹

To return to our survey of the *Theogony* – the verses following the narration of Zeus' wives constitute a genealogical miscellany, a matter-of-fact poetic enumeration of the marriages and amorous affairs of various deities, and of progeny born consequent thereto. Thus, Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite, Zeus, among several other deities, make an appearance in the initial portion of this section (lines 930–62).²⁰ The inventory is then interrupted by six lines (963–8): the first two are crafted as a kind of broad conclusion to all that has preceded, while the next four form a new proem – an invoking of the Muses to sing of goddesses and mortal men whom they have loved. This is indeed the subject of the longish set of enumerations that then follows – the mortal paramours of Demeter, Eos, Thetis, Aphrodite, Circe, and several more – and their children, “appearing like the gods” – among them famed heroes such as Memnon, Achilles, and Aeneas (lines 969–1018). Another conclusion (lines 1019–20) then ends this inventory, and yet another invocation follows (lines 1021–2): a calling upon the Muses to sing of mortal women – providing an introduction to the ensuing *Catalog of Women*, a compendium of genealogic accounts of female mortals who joined in love with the gods and the offspring they produced. While the *Catalog* (or

Ehoiai) was appended to the *Theogony* in antiquity and Hesiod deemed to be its author, present-day scholarship, again, often dates the work to a post-Hesiodic period.²¹

HESIOD: A VIEW TO THE EAST, PART I

Scholars have long had some level of awareness of similarities and interaction between the cultures of early Greece and those of the Near East (here defined broadly to include Egypt, in addition to Anatolia, Syria-Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Iran). Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, however, Classics seemed to have lost sight of archaic Greece's situation within a Near Eastern world.²² But with twentieth-century discoveries of large bodies of Near Eastern documentary evidence (and, in several cases, the decipherment of the languages in which they were composed); the recognition of an "orientalizing phase" in Greek art; and archaeological discoveries of a Greek presence in the east, and vice versa,²³ it became increasingly clear that early Greek culture had evolved, in part, under the influence of its neighbors at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and beyond.

One of the most remarkable and compelling pieces of evidence demonstrating Near Eastern influences was provided by the discovery of "kingship-in-heaven" myths among, especially, the Hittites (/Hurrians) and Babylonians. The similarity of these accounts to the Uranus-Cronus-Zeus succession myth of Hesiod's *Theogony* is indisputable.²⁴

The Hittite (/Hurrian) Kingship in Heaven Myth

Among the many thousands of documents recovered during twentieth-century excavations at the Turkish village of Boğazköy, site of ancient Hattuša, the Hittite capital,²⁵ is a set of clay tablets preserving an account of the storm-god Teššub's rise to power and attempts to unseat him from the throne of heaven. Though the texts are recorded in the Indo-European language of the Hittites, the traditions they preserve plainly show themselves to have been acquired from the non-Indo-European Hurrians of eastern Anatolia – the principal deities, such as Teššub, being in fact Hurrian.²⁶ Somewhat complicating the picture, however, is the presence of Mesopotamian gods and goddesses as well (Anu, Ea, et al.), to which we shall return below. Bearing in mind the Hurrian "origin" of this mythic cycle, the tradition will herein often simply be designated as "Hittite," for the sake of expediency.

The documentation of the Hittite myth spans several distinct texts, or “songs,”²⁷ the best known and best preserved (though still somewhat fragmentary) of which are Song of Kumarbi and Song of Ullikummi, and it is these that will occupy the focus of our attention here – though not exclusively so, for the entire cycle appears to consist of no fewer than five episodes. On the basis of various considerations internal to the text, Hoffner²⁸ argues the probable relative order of these to be (1) Song of Kumarbi; (2) Song of LAMMA; (3) Song of Silver; (4) Song of Hedammu; and (5) Song of Ullikummi. A summary telling of the Songs of Kumarbi and Ullikummi ensues in the next two paragraphs – and, following that, a brief look at the LAMMA, Silver, and Hedammu songs.

The Song of Kumarbi begins as follows: Long ago in the earliest ages, Alalu is king in heaven. In the ninth year of his reign he is deposed by his cupbearer, Anu, and flees down to the “dark earth.” Anu then reigns as king in heaven for nine years, only to be deposed by his own cupbearer, Kumarbi, the son of Alalu. Anu flees up toward the sky but is chased and caught by Kumarbi, who bites off Anu’s genitals. But having swallowed Anu’s seed, Kumarbi is impregnated with several of Anu’s offspring – most notably Teššub, the storm-god; his advisor, Tašmišu; and Aranzaḫ, the Tigris River. At “birth” these children exit from their confinement within Kumarbi’s body. During the delivery process, Kumarbi cries out to Ea (Mesopotamian god of wisdom), demanding “his child” so that he may eat him: “I will eat up Teššub. I will smash him like a brittle reed.”²⁹ Though the text is fragmented, a stone also plays a role in this episode, which Kumarbi seemingly attempts to ingest or (/and) spits out. The ending of the Song of Kumarbi is lost, but it most likely related Teššub’s ascension to the heavenly throne. In any event, at the outset of the Song of Ullikummi, Teššub, the storm-god, is clearly presented as the reigning king of heaven.

As the Song of Ullikummi opens, Kumarbi is depicted as plotting to overthrow Teššub. A usurper is required, and Kumarbi contrives to engender one by copulating with a massive rock (with dimensions measured in miles). The offspring of this union is a stone child, born from the rock, delivered by the “fate goddesses and the mother goddesses,” and given the name “Ullikummi” by his father. Kumarbi commands the gods called the Irširra-deities to take the newly born Ullikummi to the Netherworld (the “Dark Earth”), where they affix him to the right shoulder of Ubelluri, the giant who supports heaven and earth. Kumarbi’s stone progeny grows at a remarkable rate (one *AMMATU*

per day, one IKU per month³⁰). By the fifteenth day of its life, the stone has grown to be a giant of cosmic proportions:

When the fifteenth day arrived . . . the Stone was high: it was standing like a shaft with the sea coming up to its knees. The Stone came out of the water. In height it was like a [. . .]. The sea reached to the place of its [. . .] belt like a garment. The Basalt was lifted up like a . . . In the sky above it meets temples and a *kuntarra*-shrine.³¹

The Sun God of the Sky sees the monster and reports his sighting to Teššub. Then accompanied by his brother Tašmišu and sister Šauška, Teššub goes out to see the stone giant for himself and is overwhelmed with despair. Šauška (written in Hittite texts with the Akkadogram³² *IŠTAR*, the name of the Mesopotamian love-goddess) attempts to overcome the monster with her seductive charms and song – all to no avail: Ullikummi can neither see nor hear. Teššub and the other gods subsequently attack the stone giant but are defeated and routed. Counseled by Tašmišu, Teššub seeks out Ea, god of wisdom, and the “tablets bearing ancient words.” In response, Ea pays a visit to the Atlas-like Ubelluri, and seeing the stone giant Ullikummi mounted on his right shoulder, Ea calls for the “primordial gods” to bring out of storage the copper cutting tool that had been used in the earliest ages to sever heaven from earth. With that tool, Ullikummi is now sawed from the shoulder of Ubelluri, and Teššub attacks the stone giant. The lost ending of the song undoubtedly recounted the final victory of the storm god over his challenger for the throne of heaven.

The intervening songs of the cycle, though fragmentary, would appear to follow fundamentally the same thematic pattern seen in the Song of Ullikummi: Kumarbi engenders offspring for the purpose of driving Teššub from the throne of heaven, but Teššub successfully defends (or regains) his throne. The pattern is not, however, fully attested in the surviving fragments of these texts, as we shall see.

The legible portion of the Song of LAMMA begins with the god LAMMA fighting against Šauška and Teššub and gaining the throne of heaven with the assistance of Ea and Kumarbi (who perhaps should be interpreted as LAMMA’s father, in keeping with the blueprint of the cycle). Ea, however, finds the boastful and contemptuous LAMMA to be an unacceptable king and deposes him from the throne of heaven. As the tablet ends, Teššub and his vizier NINURTA are attacking and seemingly vanquishing LAMMA.

In the partially preserved Song of Silver,³³ a being that personifies silver is identified as a son of Kumarbi by (apparently³⁴) a mortal woman. This Silver appears to have taken the throne of heaven from Teššub, who, as in the Song of Ullikummi, seems to be overwhelmed by despair at his formidable opponent. In the surviving fragments, there is no account of Teššub's return to the throne of heaven.

The Song of Hedammu survives only in several fragments. Hedammu, a monstrous serpent, appears to be the offspring of Kumarbi, probably borne by Šertapšuruḫi, daughter of the Sea God – who, in any event, seems to offer her to Kumarbi, describing her in terms reminiscent of the description of the great rock that Kumarbi impregnates with Ullikummi. Hedammu is a usurper – his purpose, the taking of the throne of heaven. Teššub seemingly intends to meet the serpent in combat; however, in the text as we have it, Šauška seduces the creature with song and beauty (the same strategy she employs against Ullikummi, though successfully so in this instance).

HITTITE AND GREEK PARALLELS When the Kumarbi cycle – particularly the Song of Kumarbi and the Song of Ullikummi – is compared to Hesiod's succession myth, the overall parallel structure of the two traditions (Hittite [/Hurrian] and Greek) and the individual bits of parallelism are obvious. "Cognate" figures and events can be readily identified. (i) Greek Uranus, 'heaven', is matched by Hittite (/Hurrian) Anu – who is in origin the Sumerian (Mesopotamian) god of the sky. (ii) As Uranus is emasculated by Cronus, using a toothed sickle, so Anu is emasculated by Kumarbi, who uses his own teeth for the job; that is, Cronus equals Kumarbi.³⁵ (iii) Cronus swallows his children as Rhea bears them, holding them imprisoned within his gullet; Kumarbi carries within his own body several children, the offspring of Anu.³⁶ (iv) Cronus swallows a stone, intending to ingest his son Zeus; Kumarbi exclaims that he wants to eat his son Teššub, and soon after, in the damaged Hittite text, Kumarbi has a stone in his mouth, a stone that will be set up upon the ground as an object of worshipful adoration – like the Delphic stone set up by Zeus. (v) As Cronus regurgitates his offspring – it was mother Gaea's doing, says Hesiod – so Kumarbi "births" those gods entrapped within himself³⁷ (in the damaged text the "[] Fate Goddesses" assist in delivery; as the Fate Goddesses are routinely accompanied by the Mother Goddesses, we likely should restore their names in the gap preceding "Fate Goddesses"). (vi) Zeus – the sky-god, armed with thunderbolts – vanquishes Cronus to become divine sovereign; just so, Teššub, the storm-god, defeats Kumarbi

(= Cronus) and takes the throne of heaven: Teššub corresponds to Zeus.³⁸

One subtle difference between the Greek and Hittite traditions involves the nature of sovereign succession. In Hesiod's account, the reigning king is overthrown by his own son; in the Hittite myth, the reigning king is overthrown by the son of the previous king – two families thus alternating on the throne (i.e., Alalu₁ – Anu₂ – Kumarbi₁ – Teššub₂).³⁹ This distinction leads on to another interesting observation. As Hoffner notes, the struggles for the throne in the Hittite account pit two fundamentally different types of beings against each other – celestial gods against netherworld gods:

In Kumarbi's camp are Alalu, Kumarbi's vizier Mukišanu, the Great Sea God, the Sea God's vizier Impaluri, the Sea God's daughter Šertapšuruḫi, Ḫedammu, Daganzipa (Earth), Silver, Ullikummi, the Irširra-deities, and probably Ubelluri (who lives under the earth).

In Teššub's camp are Anu, Tašmišu/Šuwaliyat, Ḫebat, Ḫebat's maidservant Takiti, Šuaška/*ISHTAR*, the divine bulls Šeri and Ḫurri, the Sun and Moon Gods, the War God Aštabi, Teššub's brother the Aranzaḫ River (= the Tigris), the Mountain God Kanzura, KA.ZAL, and NAM.ḪE.⁴⁰

The structure is paralleled in Hesiod's *Theogony*: two different sorts of divine beings oppose each other – the gods of Mt. Olympus and the Titan gods. Olympus is already in Hesiod's work practically equated with the celestial realm of heaven,⁴¹ as in the poet's description of Zeus' furious and decisive onslaught against the Titans (*Theogony* 687–99):

No longer Zeus withheld his warrior-rage, but now at once
His breast was filled with wrath, and all his might
Revealed; and down *from heaven and Olympus* Zeus
Came hurling lightning – time and time again; the bolts 690
Flew thick from out his sturdy hand, with thunderbolt and
lightning,
One – then another – rolling out a fearsome flame.
And life-endowing earth did bellow – burning up all round,
The boundless wood howled loud with fire all round.
The ground all seethed, and boiling up were ocean's streams 695
And fruitless sea. A torrid blast closed round
The earth-born Titans; flame unspeakable stretched to

The upper air; though strong, their eyes went blind
From flashing glare of thunderbolt and lightning-flame.⁴²

On the other hand, there are the Titans. In this same scene, Hesiod identifies them as “earth-born” – chthonian – the Titans who will become denizens of the Netherworld after being vanquished by Zeus. While the etymology of Greek *Titēnes* [Τῑτῑνες] ‘Titan’ is uncertain,⁴³ the idea that they were originally chthonian in opposition to the “heavenly” Olympians is common; thus, West writes of the Titans:

There can be no certainty that they were ever worshipped: they may have existed from the beginning as ‘the former gods’ ‘or the gods of the underworld’, a mythological antithesis to the gods of the present and of the upper world.⁴⁴

This parallelism persists as the Hittite myth continues to unfold in the Song of Ullikummi. A mammoth rock conceives, impregnated by the netherworld Kumarbi, in order to bring forth a monstrous stone giant that will remove Teššub from the kingship of heaven. Hesiod tells how “gargantuan Earth” (*Gaia pelōrē* [Γαῖα πελώρη]; *Theogony* 821) conceives, impregnated by Tartarus – that primeval being and netherworld locale – in order to bring forth a monstrous dragon to depose Zeus and in his stead “rule over both mortals and immortals” (*Theogony* 837). In both traditions, the reigning king of heaven has a desperate fight on his hands, though the two differ in the telling of that tale. Hesiod speaks of Zeus’ quick and definitive response to Typhoeus – a powerful, unrelenting attack that boils the seas and melts the earth. In the Hittite version, on the other hand, Teššub realizes victory only after he has suffered a great setback in battle, subsequent to which Ullikummi is weakened, being cut off from his perch on the shoulder of Ubelluri, by the intervention of other gods – notably Ea and the “primeval gods.”

Though Hesiod makes no mention of it, there is, nonetheless, an interesting Greek comparandum at this point, if not strict parallelism. In his second-century compendium of Greek myth, the *Bibliotheca*, the mythographer Apollodorus (1.6.3) writes that in his fight against Typhon (as Apollodorus names the monster), Zeus brandishes a sickle of adamant, the same – or same type of – cutting implement that Cronus had used to castrate Uranus when he was joined in love with Gaea – a primordial severing of heaven (Uranus) from earth (Gaea). Just so, in the Song of Ullikummi, the same instrument – the primeval copper cutting tool – is used to undercut Teššub’s enemy, Ullikummi, that had been

used originally to divide heaven from earth. But while the use of the copper saw *follows* Teššub's setback, and somewhat evens the score, the adamantine sickle *results in* a setback for Zeus, as Typhon is able to wrestle it away from Zeus and with it cut the tendons from Zeus' hands and feet. The hobbled king of heaven is then helplessly imprisoned in the dragon's cave in Cilicia, but is saved through the intervention of other deities – Hermes and Aegipan, according to Apollodorus⁴⁵ (compare the intervention of Ea et al. in the Song of Ullikummi) – who recover the removed tendons and fit them back into Zeus' hands and feet. Zeus then renews his attack and vanquishes Typhon, though only after yet more divine intervention – those goddesses called the Fates trick the monster into tasting certain fruits that rob him of strength.⁴⁶

The Hittite episodes of chthonic LAMMA, Silver, and Hedammu – intervening between Teššub's defeat of Kumarbi (= Zeus' defeat of Cronus and the Titans) and the appearance of the rock-born Ullikummi (= the appearance of Earth-born Typhoeus) have no counterpart in Hesiod's *Theogony*: Hesiod relates no repeated attempts to storm the throne of heaven and wrench kingship away from Zeus.⁴⁷ Once again, however, Apollodorus shows tighter agreement with the Hittite tradition than does Hesiod. Prior to the birth of Typhon, writes Apollodorus (I.6.1–2),⁴⁸ Zeus and heaven are attacked by yet other earthborn creatures:

Vexed by the fate of the Titans, Gea gave birth to Giants, fathered by Uranus. They were without equal in the enormity of their bodies and were unbeatable in might; their appearance was terrible – hair fell long from their head and chin, and for feet they had the scales of dragons.⁴⁹

The giants assail heaven, hurling rocks and flaming trees. A confederacy of Olympian deities and the mortal hero Heracles counterattack the giants. After relating several individual duels in this Gigantomachy, Apollodorus brings the episode summarily to a close with an affirmation of the victorious defense of heaven: “and all the others Zeus destroyed, hurling his thunderbolts; and Heracles shot them all with arrows as they perished.”

The Babylonian Enūma Eliš

The earliest discovered fragments of the Babylonian creation account, the Enūma Eliš ('When on high' – the opening words of the epic),

came to the attention of scholars late in the nineteenth century; the succeeding decades brought discoveries of additional cuneiform tablets containing portions of the work. The date of its composition remains a matter of disagreement: some scholars assign the work to the early second millennium BC, during the Old Babylonian period; currently, however, it is more commonly dated to the late second millennium, that period when the worship of Marduk, protagonist of the epic, became prominent. The *Enūma Eliš* was recited annually as a part of the Babylonian New Year's festival.

That portion of the tale most pertinent to the task at hand goes like this.⁵⁰ In the beginning only Apsu, the fresh waters (male), and Tiamat, the sea waters (female),⁵¹ existed. But eventually, within their waters, the divine pair *Laḫmu* and *Laḫamu* ('silt', masculine and feminine) take shape; these then engender *Anshar* and *Kishar*. The latter pair produce a son *Anu*, said to be the equal of *Anshar* and the rival of his fathers. Continuing the crescendo of potent progeny, *Anu* in turn engenders a son, *Ea*, called the "master of his fathers." These most recent generations of the gods behave raucously, disturbing Tiamat ("they troubled Tiamat's belly," 1.23). *Apsu* and Tiamat take counsel; encouraged by his vizier, *Mummu*, *Apsu* determines that the offending deities must be destroyed. *Ea*, however, acts preemptively: he causes a sleep to come upon *Apsu*, whom he slays as *Apsu* slumbers, and he imprisons *Mummu*. Having vanquished his enemies, *Ea* and his wife *Damkina* produce a son, *Marduk* – a being of perfection, surpassing the members of previous generations.

Anu, *Marduk's* grandfather, then stirs up storms that distress Tiamat as well as certain other gods who have aligned themselves with her and who urge her to respond and to avenge her slain consort, *Apsu*. Preparations are made for war – preparations that include Tiamat (here [1.132] called "Mother *Ḫubur*," a name frequently applied to the river of the Netherworld⁵²) producing eleven monstrous offspring (dragon and serpent, *inter alios*), and the appointing of the god *Kingu* (her consort) to be commander, to whom Tiamat gives the "Tablets of Fate" – a symbol of power.⁵³

Discovering Tiamat's intentions, *Ea* becomes somber and angry, but then calming himself goes to his grandfather *Anshar* to alert him of the advancing army. *Anshar's* reaction is likewise one of despondence; he sends *Ea* and then *Anu* to try to stop Tiamat, but both in turn retreat before Tiamat's force. In deep distress, *Anshar* announces to the gods that *Marduk* shall be their deliverer. *Marduk* accepts the challenge upon the condition that he be given supremacy among the gods.

Being summoned, Laḥmu and Laḥamu join Anshar; and after a banquet, the gods set up for Marduk a throne and bestow on him kingship over all.

Marduk ventures out to meet Tiamat in battle. He ensnares her with a net, beside which the four winds (East, West, North, and South) have been stationed; and as Tiamat stretches wide her mouth, Marduk drives in a storm that prevents her mouth from shutting. As the winds distend her belly, Marduk shoots an arrow through Tiamat's gaping jaws and kills her. Marduk ensnares and imprisons the gods who had followed Tiamat – he binds the eleven monstrous creatures (which will later be transformed into statutes and stationed at the gate of Ea's house) and Kingu, from whom Marduk seizes the Tablets of Fate. He crushes Tiamat's skull, severs her arteries and splits her body into two halves, with one of which he creates the heavens, filling them with luminous bodies – constellations, moon, sun – demarcating night and day. From the remainder of her body he fashions features of earth: from her head he forms mountains, with the Euphrates and Tigris flowing from her eyes, and so forth. In a communal act of reaffirmation, all the gods then acknowledge Marduk as king.

After announcing plans for the construction of his city, Babylon, Marduk orchestrates the creation of humankind. The rebel Kingu is brought forth and executed. Out of the blood that flows from his severed veins, Ea creates the first humans.

Though the structures of the Babylonian epic clearly constitute a less strict parallel to Hesiod's *Theogony* than do those of the Kumarbi cycle, fundamental motifs common to the Greek and Hittite myths recur in the Enūma Eliš – with the Babylonian account showing, in some instances, even closer agreement with Hesiod. (i) In both the *Theogony* and the Enūma Eliš, for example, the first beings to exist are deified geophysical entities that will engender ensuing generations: Chaos, Gaea, Tartarus; Tiamat, Apsu. (ii) In all three traditions a series of divine sovereigns unfolds generationally – with each generation in some way surpassing the preceding, and the series culminating in the birth of the preeminent heavenly king: Zeus, Teššub, Marduk. (iii) All entail the mutilation or murder of some primeval male deity: Cronus and Kumarbi emasculate Uranus and Anu respectively; Ea slays Apsu; moreover, in the Greek and Babylonian traditions (a) the injured party is caught off guard (Uranus preparing to have intercourse with Gaea, Apsu asleep under Ea's spell) and (b) the perpetrator of the act (Cronus, Ea) is both the son of the Sky (Uranus, Anu) and the father of the protagonist

(Zeus, Marduk). (iv) Primeval mothers – Gaea and Tiamat – produce monstrous offspring that will battle against the preeminent rulers of heaven – Zeus and Marduk – in an effort to secure cosmic rule for the offspring or the consort of that mother – Typhoeus and Kingu; the monster(s) is/are defeated, after which the gods affirm, or reaffirm, the sovereignty of the vanquisher – the Olympians urge Zeus “to be king and to rule the immortals,” the gods assembled round Marduk bestow on him the title *Lugaldimmerankia* (‘king of the gods of heaven and the Netherworld’). Still other parallels can be adduced;⁵⁴ these are sufficient to give the reader the picture.

The Theogony of Dunnu

The Hittite Kumarbi cycle and the Babylonian Enūma Eliš are not the only examples of Near Eastern traditions paralleling Hesiod’s kingship-in-heaven myth. Also from Babylonia comes the much shorter and only partially preserved theogony of the city of Dunnu, dated to the Late Babylonian period.⁵⁵ The work has been judged particularly interesting, vis-à-vis Hesiod’s *Theogony*, for the order of appearance of certain of the primeval beings. “... In the beginning...” – so the fractured opening lines declare – there was Hain and Earth, who then produce two children: Sea, a daughter – who is created by an act of plowing – and Amakandu, a son, conceived through intercourse. After being seduced by his mother and killing his father (and so becoming sovereign of Dunnu), Amakandu marries Sea, his sister, and they produce a son, Laḥar. This Laḥar, who kills his own father – thus becoming the new sovereign – has intercourse with his mother as well, and by her engenders a son – whose name is lost – and a daughter, River. These two likewise consort incestuously, and the nameless son kills both of his parents – and so the generational saga of parent-killing and sibling-marrying continues.

Investigators have called attention to the fact that *Sea* – who is seemingly born out of the *Earth* (via ploughing) – appears in this theogony before *River*. In a similar fashion, Hesiod’s *Theogony* presents Pontus, the *Sea*, as borne parthogenetically by Gaea ‘*Earth*’; while Oceanus – the *River* that flows around the rim of earth and the father of rivers – is born afterward. The pronounced incestuousness of the Dunnu myth (extending beyond the generations enumerated here) has also been compared with the numerous incestuous sibling relations among the Titans; the Babylonian mother-son sexual unions are especially singled

out, as both Greek Pontus (“Sea” again) and Uranus have intercourse with their mother Gaea.⁵⁶

Sanchuniathon’s Phoenician History

In some respects, this is the most intriguing of the Hesiodic *Theogony*’s Near Eastern counterparts. A purported Phoenician version of the kingship in heaven myth is recorded in Greek by Herennius Philo – commonly called Philo of Byblos (first/second century AD). Philo claims that his notably euhemeristic work is the translation of an ancient Phoenician account preserved by Sanchuniathon,⁵⁷ a “poly-math and ardent researcher” (FGrH 790 F 1 §24),⁵⁸ reported to have lived prior to (or about the time of) the Trojan war. Prefacing his Phoenician tale, Philo makes mention of two sources (which are possibly intended to be one and the same) that this Sanchuniathon discovered and utilized: (i) the works of a still more ancient figure named Taautos (whom the Egyptians call Thoth and the Greeks Hermes), said to be the inventor of the symbols and practice of writing; and (ii) certain hidden texts of (the temples of?) Ammon, written in an arcane script.⁵⁹

The fundamental structure of Sanchuniathon’s theogony is, by now, a familiar one, involving four successive generations, stretching from a founding figure who plays a comparatively minor role to a sovereign storm-god. Philo begins his rendition of the Phoenician tradition with “a certain Elioun” (‘high one’, a term known from various Semitic documents, including the Hebrew Bible⁶⁰) and his female partner Berouth. They produce a son Epigeios (the Autochthon), whom they would later call Uranus, and a daughter named Ge (i.e., Gaea). Upon the death of his father Elioun (killed in some encounter with wild beasts), Uranus replaces him as sovereign and takes Ge, his sister, to be his wife; together Uranus and Ge produce four children – El, Baitylos, Dagon, and Atlas, the first three of whom are independently known to be Phoenician gods.⁶¹ El – whom Philo also names as Cronus – eventually turns against his father, Uranus, avenging his mother, Ge: Uranus has abused her sexually and tried to destroy her children. Cronus and his allies make war on Uranus and depose him; Cronus takes the throne. One of the trophies of this intergenerational war is the concubine of Uranus, whom Cronus gives to his brother Dagan for a wife. The concubine, already pregnant by Uranus, then gives birth to a son Demarous, whose name appears to occur in Ugaritic – the language of a West Semitic people closely related to the Phoenicians – as

an epithet of the storm-god Baal, or Hadad.⁶² The deposed Uranus eventually tries to regain his throne by trickery and by force, but his efforts are unsuccessful; in the thirty-second year of his reign, Cronus ambushes and emasculates Uranus, his father and former sovereign. In time, Cronus assigns sovereignty to Demarous – whom Philo at that point in his tale identifies as “Zeus Demarous or Hadad,⁶³ king of gods” – and to the goddess Astarte.

Even from this brief summary of the theogony attributed to Sanchuniathon, it is clear that Philo of Byblos was well acquainted with Greek mythic traditions. He, in fact, accuses the Greeks – and Hesiod explicitly – of having taken over their myths from other peoples – dramatically modifying adopted traditions for the sake of entertainment (FGrH 790 F 2 §40):

Thus Hesiod and the celebrated poets of the epic cycle fabricated their own theogonies, gigantomachies, titanomachies and castrations, and in popularizing these they trumped truth.

Hesiod antedated Philo by almost a millennium; even so, this is not simply a case of Philo committing the same sort of literary pilfering of which he accuses the epic poets. While the *Phoenician History* is undeniably infused with Greek mythic influences, scholars currently tend to view Philos’ theogony as resting upon a native Phoenician tradition,⁶⁴ though the form in which Philo knew that tradition perhaps dates to the Hellenistic period rather than the second millennium BC.⁶⁵ Especially noteworthy are the several points at which Philo’s account departs from Hesiod’s, and in doing so agrees with the other Near Eastern versions summarized above. For example – there are four generations of sovereign figures rather than three; El (= Cronus = Kumarbi) fights with and emasculates his predecessor Epigeios (= Uranus = Anu), paralleling the Hittite tradition, as opposed to the Greek with castration occurring without a physical struggle; and so on.⁶⁶

Hesiod’s Near Eastern Sources

I began the preceding section by noting that the Phoenician theogony is in some ways the most intriguing of the Near Eastern parallels to Hesiod’s kingship-in-heaven tradition. How so?

The historical Greeks are descendants of Indo-Europeans who made their way into the Balkan Peninsula – probably arriving in

the last quarter of the third millennium BC – relative newcomers to the Mediterranean and geographically positioned on the cusp of the ancient Near East. Hesiod's theogonic tale of a succession of divine sovereigns – Uranus, Cronus, Zeus – is almost certainly not an inherited Indo-European tradition, but, as various scholars have sought to demonstrate, one borrowed from the Near East (just as Philo of Byblos claims) – as seems practically self-evident in light of the above examination of widespread parallel traditions, attested from an early time.⁶⁷ The Hittites of Anatolia, possessing a well-attested version of this tradition, are themselves an Indo-European people, though, as we saw, the Hittites acquired their kingship-in-heaven tradition from their non-Indo-European neighbors to the east, the Hurrians, whose gods – the storm god Teššub et al. – play leading roles in the myth.

The cultural indebtedness of the Greeks to the Phoenicians is well known. Witness the alphabet: that most utilitarian – and, possibly, most significant – of Greek gifts to modernity is an adaptation of the consonantal script of the Phoenicians. In other words, it was the Phoenicians who, in a certain sense (and only in a certain sense), taught the Greeks how to write.⁶⁸ While we would doubtless look too myopically were we to seek a single conduit by which Near Eastern influence came upon the Greeks, the Phoenicians must be judged likely candidates in matters of cultural transference within and out of eastern Mediterranean regions. Of those places where the Greeks could have acquired the Phoenician script, Cyprus is probably the most likely locale.⁶⁹ With its permanent and thriving Greek and Phoenician presence in the early first millennium BC and its mercantile, cultural, and political intercourse with Anatolia, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Mesopotamia,⁷⁰ Cyprus must be considered a no less likely locale for the Greek acquisition of other Near Eastern ideas – including, especially, mythic traditions – and, hence, the Phoenicians of Cyprus the most active of catalysts in the process.⁷¹ Perhaps Philo of Byblos was not so far off the mark when he imagined it was from the Phoenicians that Hesiod and the epic poets acquired their theogonies and castration tales.

THE WORKS AND DAYS

Consider how helpful the noble poets of old have been.
Orpheus taught us mystic rites and to abstain from bloodshed,
Musaeus showed us remedies for sickness – oracles too, and

Hesiod the working of the earth, the seasons of the crops, the
 turning of the soil.
 And god-like Homer – by what did he gain honor and fame,
 Except by the useful teaching of the deployment, valor, and
 arming of men?

Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1030–36

“The working of the earth”; “the seasons of the crops”; “the turning of the soil” – at least superficially, this is the stuff of which Hesiod’s *Works and Days* is made – though not uniquely so, in two respects. First, the poet is credited with having also composed the *Great Works*, a poem, preserved only in fragments, that must have similarly treated agricultural matters, and the also fragmentary *Astronomy*, which self-evidently dealt with astronomical and calendrical phenomena. Second, *Works and Days* is not only a farmer’s manual and almanac but also a repository of practical advice and moral precepts. The *Great Works* likewise contained such admonitions, as did – and presumably even more so – Hesiod’s all-but-lost poem entitled the *Precepts of Chiron*, presented as the teachings of the centaur Chiron to his young pupil Achilles.

The didactic *Works and Days*, composed in the same epic hexameters familiar from the *Theogony* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, is couched in the form of instructions (‘I would speak [*mutheomai* (μυθέομαι)] truth’ [line 10]) to Perses, Hesiod’s wayward brother – profligate, greedy, lazy, and, thus, in danger of becoming (and perhaps already) destitute – and to an anonymous body of kings,⁷² who are willing to manipulate justice for the sake of gain. At the heart of Hesiod’s expositions are the opposing fundamental notions of *dikē* (δίκη) and *hubris* (ὑβρις): *dikē* is often translated as ‘justice’ – the sense of Hesiod’s usage being a more specifically legal than general one – or, in some Hesiodic contexts, the legal process of determining justice, that is, ‘judgment’;⁷³ its oppositional term, *hubris*, denotes ‘violence’ or, more concretely, ‘an outrage’.

Hesiod portrays his advice and warnings to Perses as being occasioned by a conflict in which the two brothers are embroiled, a conflict stemming from the division of their inheritance (lines 27–41). Perses received his share but has thrown it after judges, “gift-gobbling kings,”⁷⁴ seemingly hoping thereby to acquire greater wealth through litigation; now he is on the threshold of impoverishment and has already been begging from Hesiod, who will assist him no more (see lines 393–7). Hesiod urges Perses to let the two of them settle their own differences by that straight *dikē* which is from Zeus.⁷⁵

Hesiod admonishes Perses to work – to avoid that Eris (‘Strife’, one of the parthenogenetically produced daughters of Nyx named in the *Theogony*) who leads to “evil war” and who entices Perses to loiter at the courts, gawking at legal wrangling – but to follow, instead, that other Eris (also a daughter of Nyx, contrastively paired with her homonymous sister) who moves humans to strive to labor gainfully (lines 11–41; Hesiod similarly knows a good and bad Zelos ‘Envy’ [see below]).

And why must humankind work? It is ultimately because, reveals the poet, Prometheus stole fire for mortals (*Works and Days* 42–9):

The gods keep hid from men the means of life;
For else in just a single day you’d easily do work to have
What’s needed even for a year – a year of indolence no less.
And right away you’d hang the rudder up above the hearth; 45
The fields by labor-hardy mules and oxen tilled would
disappear.
But Zeus, instead, he hid it, roused to anger in his heart,
Because Prometheus deceived him, crooked-cunning one;
So Zeus wrought baneful sorrow on mankind.⁷⁶

Hesiod has here returned to the misogynistic tale of his *Theogony* – the sending of the first woman, Pandora, to men as punishment for Prometheus’ theft – though in the *Works and Days* he relates the myth in fuller form (lines 60–105), telling how Pandora opened a jar containing all ills and how these escaped into the world so that humankind’s former life of Utopian ease was transmuted into one of suffering and toil.

Keeping to the theme of the deterioration of humanity, the poet immediately follows up his Pandora episode with the narrative, *logos* (λόγος), of the five ages of mankind (lines 106–201). The first was a golden age, a generation of mortals created by the gods in that time when heaven’s king was Cronus: their long lives were idyllic – free of sorrow and toil, enjoying earth’s spontaneous bounty, beloved of the gods. After the passing of this age, the gods created a silver generation of mortal beings, inferior to the first: their childhood was long – a hundred years – but as adults their lives were short, being given to deeds of wrongdoing and irreverence toward the gods. Zeus put an end to the silver-age beings and created a third generation – a bronze race, said not to be “the same as” the preceding silver age (though not explicitly identified as inferior). Theirs was a mighty race of bronze-armored warriors, but by their war-making they brought themselves

to extinction. With their passing from the earth, Zeus created a fourth generation, one of heroic demigods (*hēmitheoi* [ἡμίθεοι]) – the warriors of the Theban and Trojan wars – some of whom had died in those conflicts, but others of whom Zeus blessed with an idyllic existence in the Elysian Isles (where Cronus, released from his imprisonment in Tartarus, ruled as their king, according to some manuscripts of *Works and Days*). These noble heroes were immediately succeeded by the race of iron, the people of Hesiod's own day – and he rues his lot, wishing he had either “died before or been born after” that age (line 175). Of the four metallic generations that Zeus created (setting aside the race of heroes), it is this one on which Hesiod lavishes the most attention.⁷⁷ The poet begins his description in the present tense, slipping quickly into a prophetic future. Their lot is one of labor and sorrow, though they will be a mixed group – good being mingled with evil, as the poet has been interpreted to say. In time they will experience yet greater degradation – the newborn will have gray locks; family member will turn against family member, and friend against friend; violence and wickedness will prosper and be praised. Zelos ‘Envy’ – that is, the bad Zelos, associated with the bad Eris (as opposed to the good Zelos, affiliated with the good Eris)⁷⁸ – will be ever present:

And Zelos shall walk with each and every wretched man, 195
 Cacophonous and evil-reveling, and hateful-faced.
 And then Olympus bound, both Nemesis and Aidos,⁷⁹
 Their lovely frames enrobed in cloaks of white,
 To join the race of deathless gods they'll pass
 From wide-stretched earth, and humankind forsake. . . . 200

In the end, the iron race will stand helpless in the face of evil and perish at Zeus's hand. The finality of Hesiod's prophecy is palpable: there is no suggestion that the race of iron will continue upon the earth; presumably, only gods last – yet Hesiod conceives of the possibility of having “been born after” (and to this we shall return).

Hesiod then appends to the myth of the five ages a tale meant for the unjust kings – the fable (*ainos* [αἶνος]) of the hawk and the nightingale (lines 202–12). There was a hawk that snared a nightingale within his claws. The hawk soared into the heavens with its prey; and as the helpless songbird shrieked, the hawk cruelly spoke a *muthos* (μῦθος):

Oh why the screams, you wretch? One stronger holds you now.
 And you shall go where'er I take you, songstress though you be;

A meal of you I'll make – or maybe set you free – it's up to me.
That one's a fool who'd choose against the mightier to
stand; 210
He goes in want of victory and suffers shame no less than pain.

The poet's message to the kings seems truncated; even so, his insinuation of their arrogant intimidations cannot have been lost on his audience.⁸⁰

HESIOD: A VIEW TO THE EAST, PART 2

Does Hesiod's *Works and Days* also bespeak a Greek indebtedness to the Near East? Undoubtedly so – in both particulars and generalities. West, Perry, and other scholars⁸¹ have observed, for example, that Greek fables, of which Hesiod's hawk-and-nightingale is the earliest known, find parallels in older, Babylonian fables – even exact matches at times, as in the case of the Babylonian fable of the gnat and the elephant, about which Perry,⁸² translating Ebeling,⁸³ writes, “In this case one may almost speak of the translation of a Babylonian original into Greek or at least of a paraphrase.” The genre of the fable in Mesopotamia is not, however, unique to the Babylonians; many are preserved among the literary remains of the Sumerians, the first Mesopotamian civilization to develop a means of writing. Among the Sumerian fables, Wolcot⁸⁴ has identified two that are close in sense to Hesiod's: one tells of a lion that has seized a squealing pig, the other of a butcher preparing a pig, also squealing, for slaughter.

A pig which was about to be slaughtered by the pig-butcher squealed. (The butcher said:) “Your ancestors and forebears walked this road, and now you too are walking it, so why (?) are you squealing?”⁸⁵

In each instance the helpless pig's fate lies in the hands – or jaws – of its captor, despite the victim's annoying cries. With Hesiod's hawk-and-nightingale fable, addressed as it is to the kings, one might also compare the Sumerian fable of *The Heron and the Turtle*.⁸⁶ A turtle, depicted as a quarrelsome, trouble-making predator, upends the nest of a heron, spilling her young into the water, and then tears at the bird's head with

his claws, so that blood streams down upon her breast. The heron cries and pleads her case before “the king,” the god Enki:

Let my king judge my case, and give me verdict! Let Enki
judge my case, and give me verdict!

The bird lays out her complaint to the king, who responds by commanding his minister Isimud to build some device, presumably for the bird’s protection.⁸⁷

Fables constitute only one element of the broader genre of didactic, or wisdom, literature – a genre well known from the ancient Near East. This is not to suggest that it is a genre unknown elsewhere – certainly collections of gnomic sayings and ethical exhortations are widely attested among the world’s peoples, both ancient and modern. West⁸⁸ (following in part Chadwick and Chadwick⁸⁹) provides a succinct but illuminating survey of wisdom literature worldwide. While, as one would expect, fundamental cross-cultural similarities are detectable globally, *Works and Days* shows a particular closeness to ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions. West observes:

Hesiod’s poem does . . . show closer formal similarities to Near Eastern texts than to any of those from other literatures that were surveyed. . . . If we did not know that it came from Greece, and we had to try and place it on the basis of its resemblances to other works of wisdom, we should be inclined to put it somewhere near the ancient Near East.⁹⁰

Indeed, one familiar with the book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible – the Christian Old Testament – can hardly read *Works and Days* without being reminded of that Biblical text; this is most especially so of the long section that immediately follows Hesiod’s hawk-and-nightingale fable, beginning with lines 213–214a,

But you, O Perses, attend to *dikē*, and do not nurture *hubris*;
For *hubris* is an evil to the lowly man

and extending through line 382,

And if your heart within your breast should long for wealth,
Then do these things and work – in work after work.

The book of Proverbs is quite likely the best known of Near Eastern wisdom texts to most readers of this *Companion*. Portions of the Biblical text appear to date to the eighth century BC – Hesiod’s own century. There are, however, many far older, and generally less familiar, examples of wisdom literature from the Near East. The genre is well attested within the Sumerian literary corpus (dating as early as the mid-third millennium BC). Some examples are known from Sumerian-language texts, such as *The Instructions of Šuruppak*, a collection of proverbial instructions said to have been shared by an ancient man of wisdom, Šuruppak, with his son Zi-ud-sura, long, long ago. Consider, for instance, the partially preserved lines 22–7:

You should not loiter about where there is a quarrel; you should not let the quarrel make you a witness. You should not let (?) yourself . . . in a quarrel. You should not cause a quarrel; . . . the gate of the palace. . . . Stand aside from a quarrel, . . . you should not take (?) another road.⁹¹

Other Sumerian wisdom texts are preserved in Akkadian (the languages and dialects of the Assyrians and Babylonians) translations of Sumerian originals.

Among several Akkadian wisdom works that have not been demonstrated to be translations from Sumerian is the *Counsels of Wisdom* (second half of the second millennium BC), a text that is impressionistically close to the spirit of *Works and Days*, showing several particular similarities, though of a sort common to Near Eastern didactic tradition. Let us consider as a single example *Works and Days* 706, 717–21:

Beware the vengeance of immortal gods. ⁹²	706
Don’t ever dare to mock a man for baneful soul-	
Destroying poverty, a thing that’s given by immortal gods.	
A sparing tongue – it is the treasure best of mortal kind,	
And greatest pleasure, moving in a way that’s measured.	720
If evil you should speak, you yourself will soon be spoken evil of.	

With the above compare the following lines from *Counsels of Wisdom*:

[] the lowly, take pity on him	(56)
Do not despise the miserable and [],	
Do not wrinkle up your nose haughtily at them.	

One's god will be angry with him for that,
 It is displeasing to Šamaš,⁹³ he will requite him with evil.
 Hold your tongue, watch what you say. (26)
 A man's pride: the great value on your lips.
 Insolence and insult should be abhorrent to you.
 Speak nothing slanderous, no untrue report.
 The frivolous person is of no account.⁹⁴

Similar maxims find expression in the Biblical book of Proverbs, as, for example, in the following verses:

He who oppresses the poor insults his Maker, 14:31
 He who is generous to the needy honours him.
 He who sneers at the poor insults his Maker; 17:5
 And he who gloats over another's ruin will answer for it.
 Gossip can be sharp as a sword, 12:18
 But the tongue of the wise heals.
 A clever man conceals his knowledge, 12:23
 But a stupid man broadcasts his folly.
 When you see someone over-eager to speak, 29:20
 There will be more hope for a fool than for him.⁹⁵

In Egypt, wisdom texts – constituting a well-developed genre, typically dubbed *Instructions* – span the vast gulf of time that stretches from the Old Kingdom (c. 2300 BC) to the beginning of the Christian era.⁹⁶ Compare with the several texts cited above the following lines (24.9–17 and 22.7–16, respectively) from the Egyptian wisdom text called the *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet*, a work (perhaps composed c. 1200–1000 BC) that shows particular closeness to both Hesiod's *Works and Days* and to the Biblical book of Proverbs:⁹⁷

Do not laugh at a blind man nor tease a dwarf
 Nor injure the affairs of the lame. (10)
 Do not tease a man who is in the hand of the god,⁹⁸
 Nor be fierce of face against him if he errs.
 For man is clay and straw,
 And the god is his builder.
 He is tearing down and building up every day. (15)
 He makes a thousand poor men as he wishes,
 (Or) makes a thousand men *as overseers*,
 When he is in his hour of life.

Sit thou down at the hands of the god,
 And thy silence will cast them⁹⁹ down. . . .
 Empty not thy belly [of words] to everybody,
 Nor damage (thus) the regard for thee.
 Spread not thy words to the common people,
 Nor associate to thyself one (too) outgoing of heart.
 Better is a man whose talk (remains) in his belly (15)
 Than he who speaks it out injuriously.¹⁰⁰

Another Egyptian didactic text that has close affinities with Hesiod's *Works and Days* is the *Instructions of Ankhsheshonqy*. Languishing in prison after being falsely accused of treason, Ankhsheshonqy, a priest of the sun-god Pre', etches lamentations and words of wisdom on potsherds that he regularly sends off to his son. The work is later than the *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet*: the papyrus document that preserves the Ankhsheshonqy text perhaps dates to the period of the Ptolemies (the Macedonian rulers of Egypt following the death of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC); composition of the text would be somewhat earlier. In this instance, however, it could conceivably be the case that the similarities are due to the influence of *Works and Days*, or other Greek sources, on the Egyptian text; strains of influence from the wisdom text called the *Words of Ahiqar* can also be detected.¹⁰¹

A widely disseminated work known from versions preserved in various languages of the Near East, the *Words of Ahiqar* is earliest attested in a fifth-century BC Aramaic document.¹⁰² It tells the tale of one Ahiqar – depicted as a minister of the Assyrian monarchs Sennacherib (eighth to seventh centuries BC) and, in turn, his son Esarhaddon – who was unjustly accused of sedition and sentenced to death. His life was secretly spared by his executioner for favors previously rendered, and he was eventually vindicated and restored. Not least of the ways in which the work is reminiscent of Hesiod's *Works and Days* is its blending of maxim and fable.

The Five Ages of Mankind, Part 1

Hesiod's story of the five ages requires a closer look. For some scholars, such as West, it belongs securely under the rubric of Near Eastern – or at least Asian – influence:

There is one major case of material in the *Works and Days* which must be supposed to have come to Greece from the

east: the Myth of Ages. It is a myth that could be told for its own sake, or to serve different purposes, and though it suits Hesiod's purpose well enough, it has no necessary connection with wisdom literature.¹⁰³

Abstracting from the Hesiodic tale its essence, West concludes:

When we subtract from Hesiod's narrative all that seems to have been put in to do justice to "folk memory," we are left with the doctrine of four metallic races, each of which is more sinful than its predecessor and quicker to age. The account of the last race is largely cast in the form of a prophecy. The scheme has striking oriental parallels.¹⁰⁴

Let us consider the parallel eastern traditions, which emanate from both southwest and south Asia.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL The second chapter of the Biblical Book of Daniel preserves an account of a disturbing vision that came to the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar (seventh to sixth centuries BC) in a dream. The king required not only that his own Chaldean wise men interpret the vision, but that they first clairvoyantly tell it to him. Unable to perform the preliminary assignment, the Babylonian sages were sentenced to death – though in the end they would be delivered through the actions of a young Jewish deportee to Babylon by the name of Daniel, to whom the interpretative task next fell. Daniel (2:32–6) announces the vision: Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a colossal statue:

The head of the image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet part iron and part clay. While you looked, a stone was hewn from a mountain, not by human hands; it struck the image on its feet of clay and shattered them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all shattered to fragments and were swept away like the chaff before the wind from a threshing-floor in summer, until no trace of them remained. But the stone which struck the image grew into a great mountain filling the whole earth. That was the dream.

And what of the interpretation? The vision was prophetic: the head of gold symbolized king Nebuchadnezzar and, continues Daniel (2:39–41):

After you [Nebuchadnezzar] there shall arise another kingdom, inferior to yours, and yet a third kingdom, of bronze, which shall have sovereignty over the whole world. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; as iron shatters and destroys all things, it shall break and shatter the whole earth. As, in your vision, the feet and toes were part potter's clay and part iron, it shall be a divided kingdom.

This last kingdom – which receives the most attention of all as Daniel continues to unfurl his prophecy – having feet mixed with clay, “shall be partly strong and partly brittle” (2:42): the interpretation – “so shall men mix with each other by intermarriage, but such alliances shall not be stable: iron does not mix with clay” (2:43). The kingdom that is symbolized by the hardest metal shall prove to be the weakest. It shall be destroyed by the stone, which, reveals Daniel, is the kingdom of God: “It shall shatter and make an end to all of these kingdoms, while it shall endure forever” (2:44).

The parallelism between the Daniel account and Hesiod's tale of the metallic generations is striking indeed – both in general outline and in particulars. A succession of kingdoms or generations – gold, silver, bronze, iron – will culminate in the prophetic destruction of the last. The silver stratum is explicitly stated to be weaker than the gold. To the last, the iron race or kingdom, most attention is paid: explicit reference is made to its “mixed” nature and to familial dysfunctionality. While the differences in theological particulars cannot be overstated, in both traditions the iron element will be doomed by divine intervention; what survives are the Olympian deities themselves in the prophetic tradition that Hesiod knows – it is the kingdom of God that will continue forever in Daniel's prophetic message. As West (1997) 319 insightfully observes: “The rhetorical treatment of the disasters of the last age implies that the myth came to Greece not just as a raw story outline but in literary form, that is to say in poetic form.” The question that remains to be answered is, of course, “Whence came this *logos* to Greece?”

Before going on, we should take notice that there is no stratum in Daniel's account that corresponds to Hesiod's age of heroes, sandwiched between the bronze and iron ages. Practically all classical scholars are in agreement that the heroic age represents an interpolation – a structural component that Hesiod, or Hesiod's Greek source, introduced into the

traditional tale of a sequence of metallic races in order to harmonize that *logos* with essential Greek traditions about the Theban and Trojan wars. The heroes of those great expeditions, as West puts it,

... had to be accommodated in any survey of man's past. The position they occupy in Hesiod follows from the view that they were the people that preceded us ([line] 160), coupled with an unwillingness to identify them with the Bronze race – perhaps because the epics showed them as users of iron.¹⁰⁵

IRAN A similar Iranian account is preserved in two Zoroastrian works: the *Vāhman Yašt* and the *Dēnkard*, Pahlavi (Middle Iranian) versions of two books of the *Avesta* (the collection of sacred Zoroastrian texts) that have not survived in their earlier Avestan (Old Iranian) form.¹⁰⁶ The prophet Zardušt (the Pahlavi form of the Avestan name *Zarathuštra*, the founding figure and namesake of the Zoroastrian religion), requested of his supreme deity Ohrmazd (Avestan *Ahura Mazdāh*) the gift of immortality, whereupon the god sent to Zardušt a dream-vision. As he slept the prophet saw “the root of a tree,” and on this there grew four branches – one of gold, one of silver, one of steel and one of mixed iron. After Zardušt awoke, Ohrmazd revealed to him the meaning of the prophetic dream: the four branches represent four successive ages. According to the accounts of *Vāhman Yašt* 1.2–5 and *Dēnkard* 9.8 (both based on the *Sūdkar Nask*), the golden branch symbolizes that period in which Zardušt and Ohrmazd converse with one another, a time when righteousness flourishes and demonic forces are held in check. The Pahlavi sources have woven brief historic details into the description of the silver and steel ages, and these differ between the two accounts, though in neither text are these periods presented as eras of moral decline. The age of mixed iron is one of gathering evil and of religious apostasy – a time when honor and wisdom (*Dēnkard* 9.8.5) will take their leave of Iran. With the passing of the fourth age, the “millennium of Zardušt” comes to an end.

A variant account of the metallic ages follows in chapter two of the *Vāhman Yašt* (2.14–22). Again Zardušt is said to dream of a tree, but in this instance, one with seven branches representing the periods of the millennium: gold, silver, bronze, copper, tin, steel, and mixed iron.¹⁰⁷ The nature of the golden age is the same as before; and, fundamentally as in chapter one, the Pahlavi document here identifies the reigning figures of the silver through steel ages with various historical personages

deemed faithful to Zoroastrianism. The final age of mixed iron is again a time of advancing darkness, with a lengthy description of its near-apocalyptic evils being set out following the dream narrative (*Vahman Yašt* 2.23–63). Among its myriad banes some are particularly reminiscent of the ills that Hesiod assigns to his own iron age: deceit and division will trump friendship, respect will leave the world, and parents will lose affection for their children (2.30). While in *Works and Days* iron-age people will be born with gray hair (line 181) and grow old quickly (line 185), in the Iranian account people are born smaller and weaker (2.32). Hesiod declares that there will be no appreciation for the one who keeps an oath or for the just (*dikaioi* [δικαιοί]) or the good; instead, people will praise the evil-doer and the man of *hubris* (lines 190–92), and an evil man will make false claims against a more noble man and swear that those claims are true (lines 193–4). The *Vahman Yašt* (2.39) states that justice will not be rightly determined and people will believe the words of the ignoble and maligners who swear oaths falsely.

In the account of the *Vahman Yašt* human history continues beyond the last of the metallic ages, and hence beyond the millennium of Zardušt. Afterward, in the millennium of one called Ušēdar (the first of three prophetic figures, the *sōšyants*), religious order is restored (*Vahman Yašt* 3.1–51). Next follows the millennium of Ušēdarmah (the second of the *sōšyants*), in which humans are noted as making great strides in medical care, but evil again asserts itself with the release of the imprisoned evil dragon Až Dahāk. The dragon will, however, be destroyed when Ohrmazd causes the ancient dragon-slayer Karšāsp to be awakened; that millennium comes to an end (*Vahman Yašt* 3.52–61). The final prophetic figure, known only generically as Sōšyant, then appears and ushers in a renewed purity, and cosmic history is brought to fulfillment (*Vahman Yašt* 3.62).¹⁰⁸

INDIA In Book Three of the *Mahābhārata*, that tome among ancient epics, the sons of Paṇḍu wander the wilderness spaces of northern India in their twelve-year exile. Bhima, second eldest of the Paṇḍavas, one day encounters Hanuman – the ape-lord better known from that second Sanskrit epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa* – who instructs Bhima in the four *yugas* – ages – of the world (3.148). Each *yuga* bears the name of a dice-throw; while there is no metallic symbolism, each age is marked by the god Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) taking on a color particular to that *yuga*. The first age is that of the ‘winning throw’, the *kṛtayuga*, an idyllic era in which *dharma*¹⁰⁹ holds sway; it knows no death, it knows neither toil nor pain nor illness. The earth puts forth its fruits without cultivation. In

this age the four social elements of Indo-Aryan society – the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra* classes – are well defined and perform each their appropriate function. Viṣṇu's color in the *kṛtayuga* is white – the color of the *brāhmaṇa* (priestly) class.

In the second age, that of the *tretāyuga*, sacrifice is introduced. Though *dharma* is reduced by one-fourth, mankind is nonetheless devoted to the observance of law and rites. In the *tretāyuga*, Viṣṇu's color becomes red – the color of the *kṣatriya* (warrior) class.

The *dvāparayuga*, the third age, sees *dharma* reduced by half. Ritual proliferates as the knowledge of the Vedas becomes uneven and variable among humankind. There is a falling away from truth and a consequent suffering from disease and disaster. Viṣṇu's color becomes yellow – the color of the *vaiśya* (worker) class.

The fourth and final age, the *kaliyuga*, is one that sees only one-quarter of *dharma* remaining. Ritual and sacrifice are forsaken; disease and disaster multiply; famine and sloth abound; humanity and the world spiral into decline. It is an age of discord and darkness; Viṣṇu's color is black – the color of the *śūdra* (slave) class.

Later in Book Three of the *Mahābhārata* (3.186), Yudhiṣṭhira, king among the Paṇḍavas, meets the ancient seer Mārkaṇḍeya and questions him concerning the nature of the recurring cosmic cycles of destruction and creation. The hermit then tells Yudhiṣṭhira of the four ages, how they grow progressively shorter, and how, after the completion of the last, the cycle of four begins anew – and so on and on. Mārkaṇḍeya's initial summary description of the four ages is succinct, much more so than Hanuman's earlier account of the same. Up to this point, Mārkaṇḍeya's account approximates in scope and details the description of the four *yugas* found in the ancient brahmin legal text called the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, or *Laws of Manu*, 1.68–74 (to which we shall return below; note that certain of the characteristics of each age specified in the ape-lord Hanuman's disquisition are reflected just a few lines later at *Laws of Manu* 1.79–86). Then, however, for more than 50 stanzas, Mārkaṇḍeya waxes eloquent about what things will occur as the last of the four ages, the *kaliyuga*, comes to an end.

Just a bit further along in the epic text (*Mahābhārata* 3.188), Yudhiṣṭhira again questions the sage about the discordant *kaliyuga*; and, again, Mārkaṇḍeya responds with a litany of symptoms and woes that will mark the final age – a list extending over more than 65 stanzas: the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, and *vaiśya* classes will intermingle in marriage and become like the *śūdra*; the classes will invert their proper orders; fathers and sons will turn against one another; brahmins will turn away from

their vows and rites; agriculturalists will abandon sensible practices; justice will be perverted; the warriors will victimize the defenseless; kings will claim for themselves the property of others; people will turn gray at sixteen years – the maximum lifespan – having produced children when only a child's age themselves.¹¹⁰ The similarity of these deficiencies to the ills of the final age of both the Iranian and Hesiodic traditions is self-evident, as is the extensive attention that is paid to the final age in each case.

EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA While Mesopotamia preserves traditions of human lifespan growing progressively shorter as time passes – West¹¹¹ cites the example of the Sumerian king list – there is nothing structurally comparable to the motif of four world ages found in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the Book of Daniel, Iranian religious texts, and Indic epic and law. Egypt is equally silent.¹¹² The cultural and geographic distribution of the motif must itself be of some significance, leading us to return to a consideration of the myth of ages once more below.

HESIOD: KEEPER OF THE GATE

The ancient Greeks were an Indo-European people, descended ultimately from those yet more ancient people that scholars dub the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Linguistically and culturally the Greeks thus share a common heritage with the other Indo-European populations of Europe and Asia – Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Balto-Slavic, Anatolian, Indo-Iranian, Armenian, and so on. Comparative crosscultural investigation of shared mythic traditions attested among the historical Indo-European peoples allows the reconstructive identification of ancestral mythic elements of the parent Indo-European culture.

Attributing the epithet “keeper of the gate” to Hesiod is here intended to make reference to his preservation of Indo-European mythic motifs; but some might consider the attribution to be almost tongue-in-cheek, for, they might suggest, there seems to be precious little that the Greeks – even Hesiod in the eighth century BC – have preserved of their Indo-European mythic heritage. Georges Dumézil, the twentieth-century's preeminent investigator of comparative Indo-European myth, referred to the Greeks as his *amants ingrats* “ungrateful lovers.”¹¹³ “Greek mythology,” he wrote, “escapes Indo-European categories.”¹¹⁴ As argued above, the Greeks – Hesiod in this instance – fell under the influence of Near Eastern traditions, and this is certainly

one reason – perhaps the chief reason – that they may appear to have wandered far from the Indo-European mythic fold. Even so, Dumézil's pronouncements are likely unduly pessimistic; as various scholars have demonstrated,¹¹⁵ including Dumézil himself,¹¹⁶ one can indeed identify vestiges of an Indo-European heritage preserved in the structures of Greek myth.

The Five Ages of Mankind, Part 2

In a wonderfully insightful investigation, Jean-Pierre Vernant (1983a) examined Hesiod's myth of the ages and identified there what is for the comparatist an unmistakable expression of Indo-European tripartite ideology.¹¹⁷ Proto-Indo-European society, as recognized independently by Dumézil and Émile Benveniste, was characterized by a three-part structural division, consisting of elements of sovereignty, war-making, and goods-production (pastoralism/agriculturalism).¹¹⁸ The concept was more fully explored and developed by Dumézil, whose nomenclature for the three elements, or "functions" as he called them, became commonplace in the twentieth century: Dumézil spoke of the *first*, *second*, and *third* functions, respectively – with a common shorthand content-denotation being that of the *priestly*, *warrior*, and *worker* functions. The first function is characterized by two distinct aspects – to wit, those of law and religion. In the case of some early historically attested Indo-European cultures, these three functions find expression in an actual tripartite structuring of society (i.e., a dividing of society into three classes) – notably among the Indic and Iranian peoples in Asia and among the Celts in Europe. In the case of other Indo-European peoples, however, primitive Indo-European tripartition survives only as a vestigial ideology (at least during the periods from which documentary evidence of those cultures has survived), often finding expression in religious and mythic motifs. Conspicuous among this latter group are the Italic peoples, most especially the Romans.

Vernant observed that by interpolating an additional age – that of the heroes (on the interpolation, see West's remarks above) – into the structure of the metallic generations, Hesiod constructs a classic Indo-European tripartite structure – though we might say an apparently "unorthodox" one, to the extent that each expression of the three functions is internally dichotomous, displaying a +/– opposition. This binary feature is itself, however, quite in keeping with Hesiod, who clearly displays a penchant for dichotomies and ambivalence.¹¹⁹

Hesiod's use of diametric contrastiveness occurs at many levels. We have already noted, for instance, his opposition of the good Eris and the bad Eris, of the good Zelos and the bad Zelos; in *Works and Days* 317–19, the poet presents Aidos (αἰδώς, 'respect, shame') as similarly, though not identically, ambivalent: she "both greatly harms and greatly prospers men."¹²⁰ We find such contrastiveness at the phrasal level as well: thus, in the *Theogony* (line 585), Hesiod denotes Pandora with the alliterative, oxymoronic phrase *kalon kakon* (καλὸν κακόν), the 'beautiful bane' – a denotation that itself contrasts with the name that the poet assigns her in *Works and Days* (lines 80–81), Pandora (Πανδώρα) 'All-giving' – and, continuing the spiral of contrasts, that name, no less, connotes dichotomy; in Clay's words, "To be sure, that name is as ambiguous as she is: promising all, but in reality all-consuming."¹²¹ The poet's playful contrastiveness is heightened when one considers that *Pandora* – the appellation of Hesiod's 'beautiful bane', she who was responsible for bringing evil upon mankind – was otherwise the name or epithet of a beneficent chthonic goddess endowing mortals with all of earth's delightful gifts.¹²² Hesiod's Pandora-dichotomies are part and parcel of the distinction he develops between "appearance" and "reality" and his ambivalent depiction of womankind. Clay puts it this way:

The wondrous exterior of this ancestress, or better, prototype of female women/wives is counterbalanced by the simile of the bees and the drones which depicts her inner nature, invisible to the naked eye. . . . The Woman is a semblance of a semblance, whose fair exterior stands in complete opposition to the bitter facts of her true nature.

The dilemma that follows is exclusively a human dilemma and Zeus's *coup de grâce*. The trap so carefully laid now clangs shut: if a man manages to escape marriage, he will indeed have enough to eat, but he will have no one to look after him in his old age and, since he remains childless, distant relatives will divide his inheritance. If, however, he should marry and have the luck to find a good wife, even so misery will continually battle with good; but should he chance upon a bad one, then boundless and unrelenting misery will fill his days (603–12).¹²³

Hesiod's oppositional method comes to the fore in his catalog of fantastic hybrid creatures – the monsters (*Theogony* 270–336). For example, as Clay points out, in Hesiod's description of the Graeae (the three

‘old-women’ daughters of Phorcys and Ceto; lines 270–73) the poet ignores their most salient feature – the sharing of a single eye and tooth that they pass back and forth between them – “but emphasizes rather their paradoxical combination of youth and age”; moreover, “the Gorgons encompass yet another fundamental dichotomy; for while two of the sisters are immortal, Medusa is singled out as mortal”¹²⁴ (lines 274–8). These hybrid creatures as a group contrast with Hesiod’s other hybrids – those that render the former harmless – the heroes; in setting the two against one another, Clay observes, “Hesiod calls attention to the different kinds of *μίξις* [*mixis*, ‘mingling’], the one positive and controlled, the other destructive and disordered.”¹²⁵ Indeed, she further advocates (emphasis is mine), “In a sense, the catalogue of monsters represents an *anti-cosmos* that explodes the whole conception of the *Theogony*.”¹²⁶ Other scholars have argued that +/– oppositions are to be found within certain empirically identified functional categories in Hesiod’s myths (à la Lévi-Strauss).¹²⁷ The list of dichotomies utilized by Hesiod could undoubtedly be greatly extended, but this is sufficient to give the reader an idea.

Now returning to Vernant – and summarizing his analysis very succinctly – the first two ages, those of the golden and silver races, are an expression of the Indo-European first function, the realm of sovereignty, having no affiliation with war (second function) and none with agrarian labor (third function). Gold, the element of the initial age, is a symbol of sovereignty; and upon passing from this life, the members of that golden race receive a *geras basilēion* (γέρας βασιλήιον), literally a ‘kingly privilege’: becoming *daimones* (δαίμονες), ‘divine spirits’ who dwell on the earth (*epikhthonioi* [ἐπιχθόνιοι]), they serve as guardians of humankind (protecting justice, according to most manuscripts¹²⁸) and bestowers of wealth (lines 121–6). Hesiod linguistically links the golden age beings with the just rulers of his own day, using the same or similar language to describe both (they are both “like gods,” cf. *Works and Days* 112 and *Theogony* 91; they both enjoy earth’s bounty, cf. *Works and Days* 114–20 and 225–37).

The silver age is likewise symbolized by a precious metal, though one inferior to gold; and, indeed, Hesiod explicitly states that the beings of this race are inferior to those of the golden age – the silver age is, in Vernant’s words, “its exact counterpart and opposite.”¹²⁹ After their long childhood, the people of the silver age live only briefly as adults, because of the *hubris* that they display toward one another and toward the gods – they are impious, refusing to give the gods their rightful sacrifices. Again, Hesiod’s language links the silver-age beings to the kings of his

own day – to the unjust rulers who pervert *dikē* among humankind and give no thought to revering the gods (cf. *Works and Days* 134–7 and 249–51). Zeus destroys the silver race. But even so, becoming “blessed spirits” (but not the *daimones* that their predecessors became) that have an existence beneath the earth (*hupokhthonioi* [ὑποχθόνιοι]), they receive honor. Vernant points out that their subterranean existence brings them into the sphere of the Titans, also characterized by *hubris*, and he argues that Hesiod thus constructs a parallelism between the golden and silver races of the *Works and Days* and, respectively, the Olympians (who “represent the rule of order”) and Titans (who “embody the rule of disorder and hubris”¹³⁰) of the *Theogony*. In the case of the first two of Hesiod’s metallic races, Vernant argues, the “dominant value is *dikē*, *hubris* is secondary”;¹³¹ and for *dikē* the golden race is valued positive, the silver negative: the two races contrast antithetically.

Hesiod’s bronze age is militaristic; concerning this age the poet offers no word about justice, nothing about religious observance: “We have moved from the juridical and religious plane to that of manifestations of brute force . . . , physical energy . . . , and the terror which the warrior inspires.”¹³² The men of bronze have nothing to do with agriculture as well – Hesiod tells us that they eat no bread.

... Ares’ woeful works	145
They used to love, and deeds of <i>hubris</i> too . . .	
....	
A mighty force was theirs, and arms invincible	148
From out their shoulders grew, such steely limbs	

They live by the sword and die by the sword; and seized by death they go nameless into the cold darkness of Hades’ realm. Theirs is the *hubris* of the warrior, which “consists in wishing to recognize nothing but the lance, and devoting oneself entirely to it.”¹³³

As the silver race is defined by the golden, so the age of heroes is defined by the bronze age, “as its counterpart in the same sphere of action.”¹³⁴ The heroes are warriors no less than the bronze men, but Hesiod describes them as *dikaïoteron kai areion* (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον) ‘more just (the comparative form of the adjective derived from *dikē*) and nobler’ (*Works and Days* 158) – Vernant summarizes: “the warrior who is just, and . . . willing to submit to the superior order of *dikē*”; “the warrior who is the champion of order.”¹³⁵ Though he makes no mention of it, the contrast that Vernant here perceives between the

warriors of the bronze age and those of the heroic age – between the *hubris*-type warrior of brute and raging force and the noble warrior subject to *dikē* – looks to be a reflection of a widely occurring Indo-European structure. Dumézil identified two distinct warrior-types that contrastively recur in early Indo-European traditions: on the one hand there is the brutish warrior – savage and untamed, often using his arms and hands as weapons (such as Indic Bhima, Greek Heracles, Scandinavian Starkaðr); on the other, the warrior who is intelligent, civilized, noble (such as Indic Arjuna, Greek Achilles, Scandinavian Sigurðr).¹³⁶ In Hesiod's presentation of the second duo of races – bronze and heroic – Vernant observes, his principal concern is “with the manifestation of the physical force and violence linked with *hubris*”:¹³⁷ the two groups, again, contrast antithetically – the heroes display a positive aspect within this sphere of characterization, the bronze warriors a negative.

Hesiod's own iron age – before which he wishes he had died, or else been born after – is itself dichotomous. Hesiod lives in an ambiguous age that knows both a positive and negative *eris*, both *dikē* and *hubris*, both good and ill – but in time ill will prevail; and all of these ills, Vernant observes, have as their source the *kalon kakon* (the ‘beautiful bane’), the woman with whom Zeus punished man for Prometheus' theft of fire – whose tale Hesiod tells and immediately segues to his *logos* of the five ages. In *Works and Days* the poet assigns her a name – Pandora – a name that, as we have seen, is otherwise given to a goddess of earth; more than that, the two – the gods' gift-woman and the earth-goddess – are equated – at times in an explicit way, at other times more indirectly. The gift-woman's central affiliation with the fertility of earth and of humankind is crucial for a right understanding of the iron age:

There is no longer that spontaneous abundance which, during the age of gold, made living creatures and their sustenance spring up from the soil simply as a result of the rule of justice and nothing else. Now it is man who entrusts new life to the woman's womb, just as it is the farmer who works the land and makes the cereals grow in it.¹³⁸

Hesiod depicts his iron age using concepts fundamental to the domain of the Indo-European third function – the domain of the agriculturalist, the domain of fertility.

As Hesiod has made plain to Perses, iron-age man must determine to follow the good Eris, or else the bad – that one which urges the farmer on to hard work and its fruits, or that one which keeps him from honest

labor and nourishes human strife. The former is the path to *dikē* for the farmer, the latter that of *hubris*. The diametric opposition within this age is that between the period in which *dikē* can (but will not universally) be attained in the midst of labor and sorrow (positive) and the future era of degeneration in which *hubris* alone will hold sway (negative):

This picture of the farmer misled by *hubris*, which is presented in the age of iron in its decline, is essentially that of a revolt against order; an upside-down world where every hierarchy, rule, and value is inverted. The contrast with the image of the farmer who is subject to *dikē*, at the beginning of the age of iron, is complete.¹³⁹

Hesiod skillfully preserves in his *Works and Days* – a work heavily influenced by Near Eastern tradition – an archaic Indo-European tripartite ideology, associating his several ages with the elements of sovereignty, war-making, and goods-production. He is able to do so – to create a parallel structure in triplicate out of five generations – by integrating dichotomous oppositions into the scheme of the ages – oppositions that reverberate with his fundamental contrast of *dikē* and *hubris*.¹⁴⁰

Questions immediately arise. Whence comes this tripartition? That is to say, how and in what sense is Hesiod aware of it? What is the poet's source and inspiration for the use of the ancestral tripartite ideology in his myth of the ages? Is it an integral feature of this tradition, or one that Hesiod – or some Hesiodic predecessor – has imposed upon the tradition *de novo*?

AN INDO-EUROPEAN TRADITION

We have seen that West, among others, identifies Hesiod's metallic-races *logos* as one borne to Greece out of the east. Yet might this tale of the ages itself be of Indo-European origin? When considered collectively, the individual strands of evidence point unmistakably, I will argue, in the direction of an Indo-European provenance. The first and most fundamental consideration is that of the geographic and cultural distribution of the tradition outside of Greece. We have met with this tale of Earth's ages in three literary venues: in the Biblical Book of Daniel; in Iranian (Zoroastrian) religious documents; and in Indic epic and law – hardly the geographic distribution typical of the “Near Eastern” elements that surface in Hesiod's poems.

The Book of Daniel and Persian Influence

Biblical scholars seem bedeviled by the date and compositional history of the Book of Daniel. The Biblical story is set in the reign of the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar II, during that period of Jewish history called the Babylonian Exile (c. 586–535 BC) – a time when significant elements of Jerusalem’s population had been deported and resettled in Mesopotamia following Nebuchadnezzar’s subjugation of Judah and its capital.¹⁴¹ Currently, Biblical scholars typically view the Book of Daniel, in the form in which we know it, as a product of the Hellenistic era – an apocalyptic work written during a period of Jewish persecution at the hands of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC. Regardless of when and under what circumstances Daniel acquired its present form, clearly there must lie behind that form traditions older than the Hellenistic period.

NABONIDUS Compare, in this regard, a Jewish tradition concerning the Babylonian king Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon prior to its capitulation to Cyrus and his Persians in 539 BC. One of the Qumran documents (the Dead Sea Scrolls) preserves the record of an encounter between Nabonidus and a Jewish diviner and of how this holy man counseled the king as he suffered from some affliction – an episode that is in several respects reminiscent of the Biblical stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel.¹⁴² Nabonidus – who is otherwise known as having a particular penchant for dream interpretation¹⁴³ (he states that he was called to kingship in a dream sent by Sin, the Moon-god¹⁴⁴) and confrontations with Babylonian priests – ruled Babylonia from the Arabian town of Tema, more than 600 miles away from his capital, for ten years of his seventeen-year reign, leaving his son, Belshazzar, in Babylon to manage affairs of state in his absence.¹⁴⁵ It is in Tema that Nabonidus fell ill, according to the Qumran record, and in his affliction prayed to the God of the Jews. Nabonidus busied himself with various towns in the region of Tema;¹⁴⁶ that these same towns are known as sites of Jewish settlement from later Islamic documents might be taken to suggest a Jewish presence in these places in Nabonidus’ own day.¹⁴⁷ A Jewish presence in Babylon in Nabonidus’ day is, of course, beyond question.

CYRUS When the Persian army entered Babylon in mid-October 539 BC, the city capitulated quickly and seemingly with little opposition.¹⁴⁸ Arriving two weeks later, Cyrus is claimed to have been welcomed as a liberator of this cosmopolitan city.¹⁴⁹ Babylon, like all

of Babylonia, was populated by ethnically diverse peoples: documents, for example, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar refer to the presence at his court of “Elamites, Persians, Cilicians, Jews, various emigrants from Asia Minor (‘Ionians’), ‘fugitives from Media’, and others.”¹⁵⁰ The rapid surrender of Babylon to Cyrus can most likely be attributed to the presence of pro-Persian elements already present within the city, including Jewish contingents.¹⁵¹ By 538, Cyrus had issued a decree permitting the Jewish exiles to return to Palestine and restore the Jerusalem temple. The decree was reconfirmed in 520 by Darius I, who had followed Cyrus’ own successor (his son Cambyses) on the throne of Persia.¹⁵² The prophet Isaiah can refer to the Persian Cyrus as the “anointed” of the Lord (Isaiah 45:1), called to be Yahweh’s shepherd, to fulfill His purposes (Isaiah 44:28).

THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE A salient feature that sets the Book of Daniel apart from other Biblical works is its particular linguistic complexity. While the language of the Old Testament is of course predominantly Hebrew, a large subset of Daniel’s twelve chapters – 2:4b to 7:28 – is written, instead, in the Semitic language Aramaic. Aside from a couple of minor occurrences, Aramaic is otherwise used in the Bible only for portions of the Book of Ezra, 4:8 to 6:18 and 7:12–26: passages recording communiqués with the Persian court and a decree issued by the Persian monarch Cyrus, in which he gives approval for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Ancient Aramaic survives in several distinct varieties.¹⁵³ That one found in Daniel is a form of Imperial or Official Aramaic (in use c. 600–200 BC), a *lingua franca* used in the Neo-Babylonian Empire and, subsequently, by the Persians. The Aramaic language of Daniel contains Akkadian and, more especially, Persian loanwords. The latter group of borrowings includes not only terms denoting Persian officials and vocabulary from the realm of government, but less specialized lexemes as well. For example, in Daniel 2:5, a verse in which Nebuchadnezzar threatens his Chaldean priests with dismemberment if they cannot reveal to him his dream and its interpretation, the words for ‘make known’ and ‘limb’ are Persian loans.¹⁵⁴

Linguistic and sociopolitical considerations, taken together with the evidence provided by the Qumran tradition of Nabonidus, point to the Aramaic portions of Daniel having taken shape in Mesopotamia (as opposed to Palestine) during a period of Persian influence. Composition of the Aramaic text could itself be plausibly assigned to the sixth or fifth century BC, with subsequent updating of some Aramaic vocabulary by copyists.¹⁵⁵ In a careful and balanced study of Daniel

chapter two – that chapter containing the account of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the colossal metallic statue – Davies argues that the earliest form of the narrative is of sixth-century date and that the interpretation then assigned to the four metallic components of the statue was that each represented one of the last four Neo-Babylonian monarchs: Nebuchadnezzar, Amel-Marduk, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus – the last named being the feet of clay whose collapse brought an end to the Neo-Babylonian empire.¹⁵⁶

PERSIAN INFLUENCE Biblical scholars have long acknowledged that the Persians exerted an influence on (Post)-Exilic Judaism, if they have disagreed concerning the extent and specific forms of such influence.¹⁵⁷ Nebuchadnezzar’s dream vision – the gigantic statue of gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay – is practically unique among Biblical symbols; to identify anything roughly comparable one must “adduce the bizarre symbols of Zechariah, influenced, as is commonly recognized, by the Babylonian culture and art.”¹⁵⁸ Daniel’s colossus appears, *prima facie*, to be a probable instance of Persian influence, in light of the setting described above and given the occurrence of the similar Zoroastrian tradition. Indeed, some Biblical scholars have argued in favor of this position, others against it,¹⁵⁹ but the more typical (“safer”) view seems to be that the motif of metallic ages was just something in the air that infected the Greeks, the Jews, and the Persians alike.¹⁶⁰ This is clearly not a satisfying solution; but, more than that, there is in fact an additional piece of evidence, one that appears heretofore to have been overlooked, that draws Daniel’s account more securely into the realm of Iranian cultural influence, as we shall see.

Indo-Iranian Traditions and Hesiod

If the presence of the metallic world-ages motif in Daniel can be attributed to Persian (or, perhaps more carefully, Iranian) influence – a reasonable and *prima facie* compelling hypothesis – then, within a comparative Indo-European framework, the cultural and geographic distribution of the tradition takes on considerable significance, being attested among the Greeks, Iranians, and Indo-Aryans. Indic and Iranian languages belong to a single Indo-European linguistic subfamily, Indo-Iranian. Together with Greek and Armenian, Indo-Iranian forms a well-recognized cluster within the Indo-European language family, sharing several innovative linguistic features.¹⁶¹ Such clustering reveals a period of linguistic and cultural commonality or intercourse in an early

Indo-European community whose descendants would become the historically attested Greek, Indo-Iranian and Armenian peoples. Little has survived in the way of archaic Armenian cultural usages, but the co-occurrence of the world-ages motif in Greek and Indo-Iranian lore may reveal that the origin of the tradition lies in the period of ancestral cultural commonality. Significant in this regard is the conspicuous presence in Hesiod of other features shared with Indo-Iranian tradition.

Thirty-five lines beyond the hawk-and-nightingale fable in *Works and Days*, Hesiod turns his attention to the kings and warns them of the consequences of “crooked judgments” – divine retribution (lines 248–55):

For thrice ten thousand on the earth that nurtures all
Are Zeus’s deathless watchers of our mortal humankind;
And they keep watch on judgments and on wicked works,
Enwrapped in mist and roaming over all the earth. 255

Since at least the mid-nineteenth-century work of Rudolph Roth,¹⁶² scholars have recognized the fundamental sameness of Zeus’s mortal-watchers, on the one hand, and the spies dispatched by Iranian Mithra and by Indic Mitra and, especially, Varuṇa, on the other. In the *Avesta*, Mithra is said to have ten thousand spies (*Yāšt* 10.24, 27, 60, 82, 141), stationed at every watch post, spying out those who are untrue to covenant, those who would harm the just (*Yāšt* 10.44–6). The Vedas tell how Varuṇa similarly deploys thousand-eyed spies who scour the earth (*Atharva Veda* 4.16.4), spies whom he sends out to watch “well-fashioned” heaven and earth (*Rig Veda* 7.87.3); they roam about with eyes unblinking (*Rig Veda* 10.10.8). Mitra and Varuṇa send their spies into fields and homes – to all places – to watch without ceasing (*Rig Veda* 7.61.3).

The Greek poet returns to this imagery, in a slightly varied form, a few lines further along. After again warning the kings – given to “gift-gobbling” as they are – to judge rightly (lines 263–4), and punctuating the admonition with a proverbial couplet – the kind so familiar from the Near East – to drive home his point,

The man who prepares evil for another prepares evil for
himself, 265
And an evil plan is the greatest evil to the one who plans it,

Hesiod declares that the eye of Zeus, all-seeing and all-knowing, also watches how justice is administered in the city (lines 267–9). The Indo-Iranian match is again exact. Returning to the *Mithra Yašt* (*Yašt* 10), we find frequent reference to Iranian Mithra's ten thousand eyes and thousand ears (*Yašt* 10.7, 82, 91, 141) and to all-knowing, all-seeing Mithra's thousandfold perception (*Yašt* 10.35, 82, 107). In *Yašt* 10.24, 60, 69, 82, 141, and 143, in conjunction with references to his ten thousand spies, Mithra is said to be all-knowing – as also in 10.27, where he is depicted as punishing the wayward country – and in 10.46, where all-knowing Mithra himself is said to be a spy. Likewise in India, Varuṇa is said to behold all things (*Atharva Veda* 4.16.5, following the reference to his spies) and to be all-knowing.¹⁶³ As West rightly observes, “We are dealing here with a piece of Indo-European heritage.”¹⁶⁴

Diametric opposition is a fundamental and well-known characteristic of Zarathuṣtra's Iranian religion. Writing more than 800 years after Hesiod, the Greek savant Plutarch explicates his view of Persian dualism: the Magus Zoroaster, he writes, recognized two gods, Oromazes and Areimanius, the first likened to light, the second – in contrast – likened to darkness and ignorance – two gods perpetually at war with one another. The opposition extends further: some plants are affiliated with the one god, some with the other; again, certain animals belong to the good Oromazes – such as dogs, birds, and hedgehogs – and others to the evil Areimanius – the single example provided being that of the water rat (*Isis and Osiris* 46–7).

Plutarch's Oromazes is Ahura Mazdāh (the Pahlavi Ohrmazd that we encountered above), the Iranian deity that the reformer Zarathuṣtra acknowledged as supreme god; Areimanius is Angra Mainyu, locus of the power of darkness. The two encapsulate the diametrically contrastive notions of *aša* ‘order, truth’ and *drug* ‘lie’. At times the opposition is formulated as a contrast between Spənta Mainyu (‘beneficent spirit’) and Angra Mainyu, who are then described as twins – the former having chosen *aša*, the other *drug*. Among humankind, one who follows *aša* is an *ašavan*; one who does not is a *dragvant*.¹⁶⁵

The roots of Zoroastrian dualism clearly lie in an earlier period. With the Persian contrast of *aša* and *drug*, compare, for example, the Vedic distinction (with cognate terms¹⁶⁶) of *ṛta* ‘order, truth’ versus *druh* ‘harm; demonic spirit’. The Sanskrit term *ṛta* is eventually superseded by *dharma*; in the *Laws of Manu* 1.26, Brahma, in creating the universe, is said to have distinguished *dharma* from (its opposite) *adharma* and to have imposed on the creatures he brought forth oppositional pairs, such as happiness and unhappiness.

Cosmology and Cosmogony

The cosmological doctrine of cyclically recurring, progressively diminishing ages, each uniquely affiliated with a social caste, is complemented in Vedic lore by a well-known cosmogonic tradition. *Rig Veda* 10.90 (the *Puruṣa Sūkta*) records it. In the beginning there was a great cosmic giant, *Puruṣa*. The gods sacrificed this giant and with their victim's dismembered body fashioned the cosmos. Conspicuous attention is given to the creation of the *varṇas* (classes) of human society: from the giant's mouth they formed the *brāhmaṇa* class (priests), from his arms the *kṣatriyas* (warriors), and from his legs the *vaiśya* class (workers); his feet gave rise to the *śūdra*, the non-Indo-Aryan slave caste.

The tradition is similarly rehearsed as a part of the creation discourse in the *Laws of Manu* (1.31). It is in this same discourse – subsequent to and dependent upon the cosmogonic *Puruṣa*-dismemberment tradition – that the account of cyclic cosmic ages, the four *yugas*, each affiliated with a particular *varṇa*, appears (1.68–74, 79–86). And again, immediately following the latter exposition of the *yugas* (1.79–86), the discourse turns back to the four classes, their creation out of the *dis-membra* of *Puruṣa* and their consequent natural functions (1.87–93).

And so it is in the *Mahābhārata*. Sandwiched between his two descriptions of the fourth age, the *kaliyuga* (*Mahābhārata* 3.187), the Brahmin Mārkaṇḍeya tells Yudhiṣṭhira of how he had roamed a devastated, flooded earth at the culmination of a *kaliyuga* and encountered a god who identified himself as Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) – creator and destroyer. In teaching the seer of his creative acts and his cosmic being, the god declares that the *brāhmaṇas* are his mouth and the *kṣatriyas* his arms, that the *vaiśyas* are at his thighs and the *śūdras* at his feet. The god tells of how he creates himself when *dharma* begins to wane and of the four characteristic colors he takes on in the four successive *yugas*. When the time comes that *dharma* has diminished by three-fourths, it is Nārāyaṇa himself who destroys the cosmos. Cosmology and cosmogony are interlaced.

While the Vedic tradition of the sacrificed primeval giant has undergone culture-specific reworking to the extent that it has incorporated the indigenous (non-Indo-Aryan) *śūdra* class, this creation account is widely acknowledged to be an Indo-European inheritance. Homologous traditions are broadly attested among Indo-European peoples – Irish, Slavic, Germanic, and others.¹⁶⁷ Especially close is the Norse cosmogony, preserved in the Eddic poem the *Grímnismál* (40–41) and by Snorri Sturluson in his *Prose Edda*, telling how the god Óðin and his brothers dismembered the body of the primeval giant Ymir and from

his body parts created the cosmos. An Old Russian version of the cosmogony survives in the poem entitled *Stič o golubinoj knig* ('Poem on the Dove King') and parallels the Vedic text in detailing the creation of the classes of society – in this instance the three canonical Indo-European elements only, that is, those of sovereignty, physical might, and goods production. In these and still other Indo-European traditions treating the genesis of human society, the priestly (sovereign) element arises from the head of the dismembered victim, the warrior from the arms and upper body (theirs is strength and heart), and the goods-producing stratum from the lower body.¹⁶⁸

Especially relevant for our concerns are Iranian vestiges and permutations of this Indo-European cosmogony. For example, the Pahlavi *Škend Gumānīg Vizār* (1.20–24),¹⁶⁹ in the context of a creation account, compares body parts to the social classes of Iranian society, without reference to the sacrificed primeval giant. The head is likened to the priests, hands to the warriors, the belly to agriculturalists – that is, literally, to the 'pastoralist – herdsman' class¹⁷⁰ – and the feet to the *hūiti* class, a fourth element (a so-called artisan group¹⁷¹) appended to the three Indo-European classes, here structurally and functionally matching the position of the *śudra* in the Indic cosmogony of *Puruṣa*.¹⁷² Interestingly, the comparison is made in conjunction with the symbol of a great tree, representing the religion created by Ohrmazd; on the tree are four twigs, each one symbolizing one of the four social classes.¹⁷³ Compare the cosmology of Zardušt's dream of a root of a tree with four branches – gold, silver, steel, and mixed iron – representing four successive ages. Again, cosmology and cosmogony intertwine.

Puruṣa, the Indo-European cosmic giant of *Rig Veda* 10.90, and homologous Indo-European traditions lead us back to the colossus of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter two. The superficial similarity between the Biblical dream image and Indo-Iranian cosmology cum cosmogony is obvious. Given the proposed Iranian origin of the Biblical tradition, it would be but a small step to take to posit that the gigantic statue whose constituent metallic body parts represent successive political ages has its origin, in effect, in a mapping of the Indo-Iranian cosmology of world ages onto the Indo-Iranian (and Indo-European) cosmogony of the primeval giant (and indeed the Pahlavi text cited above comes very close to this). The subtlety of this fusion and its fidelity to the individual traditions involved is only reasonably contextualized within an "Iranian setting" (defined either more broadly or more narrowly) and gives the decidedly affirmative nod to the Biblical tradition having taken shape under Iranian influence.

TABLE 3.1. *Comparison of Indo-Iranian Traditions: Cosmogonic and Cosmologic*

Daniel Chapter Two		Iranian Cosmology	Indic Cosmology and Cosmology		Indo-Iranian Social Classes
<i>Body parts of colossus</i>	<i>Metal</i>	<i>Metal</i>	<i>Yuga colors</i>	<i>Body parts of Puruṣa</i>	<i>Affiliated with yugas and body parts</i>
Head	Gold	Gold	White	Mouth	Priests
Arms/breast	Silver	Silver	Red	Arms	Warriors
Belly/thighs	Bronze				(Goods producers)
Legs	Iron	Steel	Yellow	Legs	Goods producers
Feet	Clay/iron	Mixed iron	Black	Feet	Slaves/artisans

The similarities and connections are summarized in Table 3.1. In the rightmost column, the Indo-Aryan and Iranian social classes listed are those associated with the corresponding world ages (*yugas*) attested in Indic tradition and the corresponding body parts attested in both Indic and Iranian tradition. Notice that in the Biblical tradition, the Indo-Iranian stratum of the goods-producers has been effectively bifurcated by assigning “belly and thighs” and “legs” – both of which are body areas affiliated with the Indo-European goods-producing class – to separate eras, bronze and iron respectively. The Semitic prophetic adaptation is one in which the original Indo-European social symbolism has *no relevance*. While this lower body (i.e., goods-producing) division is reminiscent of the dichotomous opposition incorporated within Hesiod’s iron age (age of goods-producers), the innovative bifurcation of Daniel is seemingly required simply to fill out the interpretative structure of the Biblical prophecy of successive political powers.

Conversely, unlike the Indic and (at least some) Iranian traditions, the Jewish prophecy makes only a partial distinction between the stratum of the feet and that of the legs: in Daniel’s interpretation of the dream, the feet of iron mixed with clay provide additional interpretative information regarding the kingdom of iron (it will be divided); in

Indo-Iranian traditions, the feet symbolize a distinct fourth social class added to the Indo-European tripartite structure. This variation might be taken to suggest that Jews in Babylon adapted an Iranian (Median?) tradition that antedates the incorporation of a fourth class into Indic and Iranian cosmogony and cosmology. More likely, given the occurrence of a distinct “mixed-iron” stratum in the Pahlavi cosmologies, Daniel’s departure from Iranian tradition again reflects the freedom of prophetic adaptation.

HESIOD’S MYTH OF THE “AGES”: INDO-EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES AND ADAPTATION

The evidence clearly leads us in this direction: the tradition of metallic ages underlying Nebuchadnezzar’s dream vision as preserved in Daniel chapter two is of Iranian origin. That vision and its interpretation draw upon both a cosmology that is common Indo-Iranian and a cosmogony that is common Indo-European. That same cosmology is preserved no less in Hesiod’s myth of the ages. And this shared cosmology is, in fact, only one of several motifs common to Hesiod and Indo-Iranian tradition. The ancestors of the Greeks and the Indo-Iranians, and of the Armenians as well, were once joined as members of a common culture, as the linguistic evidence unmistakably reveals. One can most reasonably conclude that the co-occurrence in Hesiod and Indo-Iranian tradition of an idiosyncratic set of features is the consequence of shared inheritance of a common ancestral tradition.

As one might expect, the Greek form of the inherited myth of world ages is not uniquely preserved in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. Other Greek instantiations of the tradition, attested directly or indirectly, show even closer agreement to the Indo-Iranian forms.¹⁷⁴ For example, Ovid’s version of the myth in his *Metamorphoses* (1.89–162), which the Roman poet must have adapted from some Greek version other than that of *Works and Days*,¹⁷⁵ is particularly close to the Indo-Iranian accounts in its description of the ages. Aratus (*Phaenomena* 96–136), a Greek author of the third and fourth centuries, in his account of the goddess Dike (‘Justice’) and her flight from the earth to heaven, where she became the constellation Virgo (Greek Parthenos), describes the first three ages – golden, silver, and bronze (the age in which she fled)¹⁷⁶ – in terms, again, highly reminiscent of the Indo-Iranian traditions.¹⁷⁷

And just a brief word regarding the metallic scheme for naming the ages in Iranian and Greek traditions: it is clear that there is full agreement in Persia and Greece in the first, second, and fourth age positions: those of gold, silver, and iron. The use of bronze for the third metallic age in Hesiod's *logos* equally finds a correspondence in Iran in Zardušt's dream of the seven branches and an exact positional match in the Iranian tradition underlying Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel. The simplest (theoretically most economical) and, therefore, best hypothesis (other factors being equal) is that one which posits that the use of metals to designate the several ages in the descending order gold, silver, bronze, and iron is a feature of the ancestral Greek/Indo-Iranian tradition – an inherited feature preserved by Greeks and Iranians and not an independent, parallel innovation of each descendent people – a more cumbersome and a priori less likely hypothesis. The substitution of steel for bronze in Zardušt's four-branch dream is undoubtedly a specific Zoroastrian modification of the inherited Indo-Iranian tradition, as is the Indic replacement of the metal scheme by that one utilizing the colors affiliated with the several castes (*varṇas*, literally meaning 'colors'¹⁷⁸). The common ancestral Indo-European community from which the historical Greek and Indo-Iranian (and Armenian) peoples descended must have existed as a cultural and linguistic entity the third millennium BC, a period that pre-dates the technology of iron production. One could of course argue that the insertion of iron – "mixed iron" – into the Greek and Iranian traditions is a secondary development occurring independently in Greece and Iran, but this is neither necessary nor desirable. Documentary sources attest to the knowledge and use of iron harvested from meteorites as early as the third millennium BC:

Texts from Mari, Egypt, and Hittite archives refer to iron as black stone from heaven, and reflect elite, votive and ritual uses that correspond to archaeological finds in both Greece and Levantine contexts, in which iron is limited to ritual and burial contexts.¹⁷⁹

Significant for the present study is the observation that iron-bearing meteorites in the vast majority of instances consist of a mixture of iron and other materials.¹⁸⁰ Iron from a stone fallen from heaven, typically "mixed iron," would seem a more than appropriate metal for symbolizing the age of cosmic dissolution and catastrophe.

Indo-Iranian Loss of Order and Erosion of Social Boundaries

What became conspicuously clear in the discussion of the preceding sections is that the Indo-Iranian myth of world ages is one in which each age is linked intrinsically to a social class. The structure is most transparent in India, where each age is marked by the color that is characteristic of the corresponding class, and the ages follow a hierarchical order, best to worst, that aligns itself with the hierarchy of social classes. *Dharma* progressively decreases by one-quarter as time runs down through the class-affiliated ages. It is, in fact, a breakdown in the proper relations and ordering of the classes – a loss of *dharma* – that is critically involved in the topsy-turvy unraveling of the cosmos in the final age. To recapitulate and elaborate the symptoms of that age from our earlier discussion of *Mahābhārata* 3: society becomes mixed – the three classes of Indo-European origin, the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, and *vaiśya*, intermarry; the *brāhmaṇa* forsake the Vedas and their sacred duties; judicious agricultural practices are abandoned; the *kṣatriyas* rape and steal and refuse to give protection; the three classes lose their distinctiveness – all blur as a single class; any person acts as a brahmin; the Indo-European classes are oppressed by the *śūdras*; the *śūdras* become the interpreters of the law, the brahmins their students. At the end, an apocalyptic destruction comes. But then, slowly, recovery begins – starting with the *brāhmaṇa* class – and a new *kṛtayuga* (the ‘Winning Age’) appears: the brahmins return to their rites; the *kṣatriyas* protect the earth; the *vaiśyas* look to their own tasks; the *śūdras* serve the Indo-European classes. The cosmological process begins anew.

Prior to Zoroastrian reforms, the Iranian version of the myth of ages must surely have been one in which class hierarchy, and its decay and consequent disorder, figured prominently. This is strongly suggested when three factors are considered collectively. The first (and trivially obvious but necessary) consideration is the very survival and essential presence of the three ancestral classes (priests, warriors, cultivators) in Iran, as in India.

A second consideration is provided by that evidence adduced above for the Iranian survival of the Indo-Iranian (and Indo-European) cosmogony of the primeval giant – a cosmogony intimately affiliated with the creation of the three classes (a cosmogony even showing accommodation to a fourth class in Iran, just as in India). As in Indic tradition (evidenced by the *Laws of Manu*) the cosmogony is interlaced with the cosmological myth of ages by way of the three social classes, just so,

in the Iranian-loan tradition of Daniel, the body-part-specific classes of the cosmogony are mapped onto the cosmological account of succeeding ages (see the homology of correspondences of Table 3.1). In other words, in Iranian tradition, as in Indic, each age is affiliated with a specific social class in the relative descending order of 1) priests, 2) warriors, and 3) goods producers.

Add to these a third consideration. The description of the fourth and final age, which sees the undoing of just religion and ordered society, is cast in terms of Zoroastrian historicized eschatology – it is a time of demonic rule. Even so, in spite of Mazdean reworking of inherited Indo-Iranian tradition, there remain specific references to elements of society functioning outside of their appropriate arena and to the blurring or inverting of social divisions, much as in *Mahābhārata* 3. Within the Zoroastrian litany of fourth-age lamentations, frequent reference is made to the degeneration of religious ritual (*Vāhman Yašt* 2.36–7, 45–6) and of priests being treated with contempt (2.38–9) or forsaking their priestly responsibilities and devotions (2.40); commoners will marry the daughters of priests and noble persons (2.38); the unqualified will make legal and religious pronouncements (2.39); noble persons will beg and debase themselves (2.47); slaves will acquire sovereignty (2.49). To these similarities between the Indic and Iranian tradition could be added numerous shared symptoms of the final age that do not relate directly to social-class breakdown.

In both the *Vāhman Yašt* (1.5 and 2.22) and the *Dēnkard* the final age of Zardušt's vision is described as one of “mixed iron.”¹⁸¹ In a completely parallel fashion, in the Iranian version of the tradition that is reflected in Daniel chapter two, the culmination of the fourth and final kingdom is presented in terms of “clay mixed with iron.” For the Jewish prophet, the statue's feet of mixed iron serve to symbolize that the final foretold kingdom is one in which “they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together” (2:43). While the prophet has turned a foreign-born idea to a message of hope and promise for his own time and people – true to his role as a Biblical prophet – in origin, the notion of a “mixing in marriage that does not hold together” must have been engendered in an Iranian tradition of the social mixing of – the loss of distinction and proper ordering of – the Indo-Iranian classes, one that leads to the dissolution of society, a symptom of the diminution of order in the final age. As we have seen, there also occur in the Indic tradition explicit references to the intermarrying of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, and *vaiśya* classes in the last age, the *kaliyuga*, as there are references in the Zoroastrian text to perverse marriages between the lowly and

the high-born in the final, “mixed” age. This cosmological doctrine of social mixing, of the mingling and confusion of the canonical Indo-European classes, and accompanying upheavals of the final age, must be at least Proto-Indo-Iranian in its inception.

Hesiod’s Mixed Iron “Age”

And so we return to Hesiod. In the lines of the Greek poet, the notion of “mixed” receives a no less explicit expression in the description of the final age, the age of iron (*Works and Days* 174–84):

But after that . . . I wish I’d not have been among the men
Of generation five, but that I’d died before, or else been
 later born. 175

For now indeed’s a race of iron; and never will their toil
And sorrow cease by day, nor exhaustion in the night;
The gods shall give them grievous cares.

But even so for them will good be mixed with ill. 179
And Zeus will end this race of mortal men as well, 180
When’er at birth gray hair is on their temples seen. 181

A father his children will not resemble, nor children their father;
And neither guest to host, nor comrade to comrade,
Nor brother will be dear, as in the former time.

Line 184 is followed by a running list of yet more sorrowful symptoms marking the end of the time of the race of iron (symptoms to which we have already alluded): people – ruthless and ignorant of the wrath of the gods – will dishonor and bemean their parents; exercising power as they wish (“might makes right”), one man will sack the city of another; there will be no gratitude for oath-keepers and the just; the low-born man will defame the noble and oath-swear that his crooked words (*muthoi*) are truth; Zelos (‘Envy’ – the evil one) roams abroad; and Nemesis and Aidos flee the earth. After our exploration of the Indic and Iranian traditions, this is all familiar territory.

In his commentary on the *Works and Days*, West notes that lines 179–81 (those italicized above) “seem to interrupt the train of thought inopportunely: 182 ff. look more like a continuation from 178 than a series of portents parallel to grey-haired babies.”¹⁸² Leaving aside the matter of portents (lines 180–81) for the moment, one must agree that line 179 (bold and italicized) looks and feels decidedly out of place. This, however, is an artifact of translation.

Line 179 is of course the one that encodes the notion of ‘mixed’ or ‘mingled’ (*memeiksetai* [μεμείξεται]) – as we have seen, a fundamental characteristic of descriptions of iron-age society. The translation that I offered above – “But even so for them will good be mixed with ill” – is one typical of this line. What is being “mixed” is *esthla* (ἐσθλά) with *kakoisi* (κακοῖσι). In a typical reading of this line, these two neuter plural adjectives are interpreted as functioning (substantivally) as nouns: that is, ‘good things’ and ‘evil things’, respectively. As West notes,¹⁸³ Hesiod also invokes good and evil together in *Theogony* 609–10, where remarking on the man who has married a *good* wife, the poet declares, misogynistically, that his is a life in which evil (singular *kakon* [κακόν]) is constantly set against (*antipherizdei* [ἀντιφερίζει]) good (singular *esthlō* [ἐσθλῶ]); see Clay’s remarks cited previously.

The idea that the human condition is characterized by the presence of both good and ill is one that is familiar to early Greek poets – as, undoubtedly, to the greater part of humanity, at all times, in all places. Homer knows it. In *Odyssey* 15.488–9, he places on the lips of Odysseus the phrase, addressed to the swineherd Eumaeus, “Zeus has surely given you good (*esthlon* [ἐσθλόν]) alongside ill (*kakō* [κακῶ])”; the utterance may very well be an adaptation of a common proverbial expression.¹⁸⁴ The concept recurs, embroidered with mythic details, in *Iliad* 24.525–33, as a mournful Achilles speaks to the grieving Trojan king, Priam, come to the Greek camp to collect the body of his son, Hector:¹⁸⁵

For thus the gods have spun the thread for wretched
 mortalkind 525
 To live with grief – but they themselves are sorrow free.
 Two jars there are that sit in Zeus’s floor – of gifts
 He gives – from one come ills, and blessings from the other.
 To him whom thunder-loving Zeus should grant a mix,
 He meets with ill at times, at other times with good; 530
 But whom he gives of only sorrows, him he makes the fool
 Of fortune – baneful hunger drives him on across the earth
 divine,
 And here and there he wanders, honored not by gods nor
 mortalkind.

The ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition knew well this motif of the god who seemingly (from a human perspective) arbitrarily sends both good and ill to mortals: it is the problem of the so-called righteous

sufferer. Thus, for example, in a Babylonian poetic text of the later second millennium BC – *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* ('I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom') – one Šubši-mešre-Šakkan rehearses how at the hands of his god Marduk he has fallen from prosperity into disease, ruin and rejection. The poem begins with a hymn to Marduk in which the deity's apparent capriciousness is rehearsed again and again, in lines such as (Tablet 1, lines 13–14, 23–4):

He it is, in the brunt of whose anger many graves are dug,
At the same moment, he raises the fallen from annihilation.

...

He speaks and makes one incur many sins,
On the day of his justice liability and guilt are dispelled.¹⁸⁶

Forsaken by Marduk, other gods desert the sufferer, who wanders down-cast and defamed (Tablet 1, 77–83):

I, who walked proudly, learned slinking,
I, so grand, became servile.
To my vast family I became a loner,
As I went through the streets, I was pointed at, 80
I would enter the palace, eyes would squint at me,
My city was glowering at me like an enemy,
Belligerent and hostile would seem my land!¹⁸⁷

The ways of the gods are incomprehensible (Tablet 2, lines 43–5):

(What the gods) intend for people changes in a twinkling:
Starving, they become like corpses,
Full, they would rival their gods.¹⁸⁸ 45

There is a flip side to the Greek view that Zeus doles out a mix of good and ill, or only ill, to a person. When Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, finds the destitute Odysseus washed up on the shores of her isle, she tells him that "Olympian Zeus himself dispenses happiness to humans – both to the good (*esthlois* [(ἐσθλοῖς)]) and to the bad (*kakoi*σι [κακοῖσι]) – to each one as he wishes" (*Odyssey* 6.188–9).

Did such sentiments exert some measure of influence on "Hesiod's" own signification of the line 179 – shaped and reshaped throughout the oral performance history of *Works and Days*? Possibly so;

they have certainly influenced Hesiod's modern interpreters. The comparative evidence provided by Indic and Iranian parallels reveals, however, that the fundamental sense of the verse in its inception must certainly have been different from that conveyed in the above ("typical") translation (and, following from that, that lines 179–81 do not in fact "interrupt the train of thought," as will become clear). As in the homologous Indo-Iranian traditions, the entities being mingled in the final age are not "good things" and "bad things" – the good and bad experiences of life – but social classes. In other words, a more accurate translation of line 179 would be something like:

But just the same, also among them the noble will be mingled
with the low-born.

The verb is a future perfect (*memeiksetai* [μεμείξεται]), indicating that this intermingling will be an ongoing state of affairs characterizing the race of iron – precisely the picture painted in the Iranian and, especially, Indic descriptions of the final age. And why does Hesiod say "also"? To that we shall return.

GREEK EVIDENCE: HESIOD AND THEOGNIS Interwoven with the comparative evidence are at least two strands of Greek-internal evidence. First there is the remarkably apropos elegiac poem 183–92 of the archaic Greek poet Theognis. An aristocratic resident of the Greek city of Megara during the mid-sixth, or perhaps more likely, the second half of the seventh century BC, extending into the sixth,¹⁸⁹ Theognis laments the social changes taking place in his world, particularly the loss of class distinctions. People insist on having purebred livestock, he declares, but a noble man (*esthlos anēr* [ἔσθλος ἀνὴρ]) has no qualms about marrying the low-born daughter of a low-born man (*kakēn kakou* [κακὴν κακοῦ]) if there is a profit in the deal (lines 185–6); and, vice versa, a woman is willing to become the wife of a low-born man (*kakou andros* [κακοῦ ἀνδρός]) if he has money (lines 187–8). In sum (lines 189–92):

... Both the noble man marries the daughter of the lowly,
And the lowly man the daughter of the noble; money has
mingled genes. 190
So do not marvel, Polypaides,¹⁹⁰ that the citizens' genes
Are being watered down: for the noble are being mingled with
the low-born.

The vocabulary throughout answers to that of Hesiod's lines: the "noble" (*esthlos* [ἔσθλός]); the "low-born" (*kakos* [κακός]); a "mingling" of the two (verb stem *mi(s)g-* [μι(σ)γ-]). Each with their common verb and neuter plural adjectives, Theognis' decrying of a present social upheaval in line 192 – "the noble are being mingled with the low-born" – recapitulates Hesiod's prophetic warning of a future state of affairs in *Works and Days* 179 – "the noble will be mingled with the low-born." In both Hesiod and Theognis we are surely dealing with the archaic (and inherited) stock-in-trade language of what was perceived to be the reprobate intermingling of the elements of society. While both poets' verses have a certain stand-alone proverbial ring, Theognis' line is nested within a fuller contextual framework; and from a similar greater formulaic context, Hesiod's must have been extracted. That context, in conjunction with the comparative evidence adduced above, suggests to us that for Hesiod (line 179), no less than for Theognis (line 192), the neuter adjectives *esthlon* and *kakon* (*esthla* and *kaka*) have lexically-specific referents, namely, the neuter noun *genos* (γένος), which Theognis uses in lines 190 and 191, prefacing the "mingling" phrase of 192.

This word – *genos* – is one that, in some of its uses, has no comfortable equivalent in present-day English.¹⁹¹ In the translation of lines 190 and 191 above, I have rendered it by English 'genes' (and not only for the etymological connection). For their translations, Gerber and West both choose 'blood' and 'stock' (for lines 190 and 191, respectively);¹⁹² Wender has 'blood' (190) and 'race' (191);¹⁹³ Fowler opts for 'breed' (190) and 'line' (191);¹⁹⁴ and Mulroy for 'lineage' (in 190 only – avoiding direct translation in 191).¹⁹⁵ It is a word of great antiquity, existing already in Proto-Indo-European **ǵenh₁-os*, leaving descendants not only in Greek, but in Latin (*genus* 'birth, origin, race, class') and Sanskrit (*janas-* 'race') as well. From its root **ǵenh₁-* ('to give birth, to beget') plus various appended suffixes, numerous words were formed in descendent Indo-European languages that were used to designate various units and levels of social structure: for example, Latin *gens* ('race, class', and a term for a family group); Old English *cynn* ('race, family'); Avestan *zantu-* ('tribe'); Sanskrit *jana-* ('race, tribe, people').¹⁹⁶

Greek *genos* is of course the very term that Hesiod employs for conceptually framing his presentation of the myth of "ages." Rather than temporal ages or epochs of sovereignty, he talks of a "golden *genos* of mortal men" (line 109); which is followed in turn by a "silver *genos*, far inferior to the golden, like them neither in body nor mind" (lines 127–9); and then a "third *genos* of mortal men – one of bronze – not at all

TABLE 3.2. *Comparison of Greek and Indic Traditions*

Greek <i>Genos</i>	Indic <i>Yuga</i> and <i>Varṇa</i>
Golden	Kṛtayuga: Brāhmaṇa
Silver	Tretāyuga: Kṣatriya
Bronze	Dvāparayuga: Vaiśya
[Heroic]	
Iron (The period of mingled <i>genē</i>)	Kaliyuga: Śūdra (The period of mingled <i>varṇas</i>)

the same as the silver” (lines 143–4). The poet’s introductory description of the fourth *genos*, the heroes, is subtly different: they are said to be a godlike *genos*, demigods, lauded as simply “more just and nobler” – the implicit progressive degradation characterizing the previous three *genē* is here reversed. Less subtle is the very presence of the heroes in this *logos* of metallic ages – Hesiod’s conspicuous addition. Finally comes the “*genos* that is iron,” with all its attendant woes – the degradation is brought to fulfillment.

Once *genos* is identified as the referent of Hesiod’s adjectives in line 179 (“the noble [*genos*] will be mingled with the low-born [*genos*]”), an unexpected, though fully transparent, parallelism reveals itself between the early Greek tradition upon which Hesiod is drawing and its Indic cognate. Consider Table 3.2.

Each age is affiliated with a particular *genos* or a particular *varṇa*; and, more idiosyncratically, the final age is not only affiliated with a particular *genos* / *varṇa*, but also with a mixing of *genē* / *varṇas*. In India, the *kaliyuga*, identified with the social class (*varṇa*) of the non-Indo-European *śūdras*,¹⁹⁷ is that period characterized by a disordered and degenerate jumbling of the social classes (*varṇas*) that are individually affiliated with the various ages (*yugas*) that precede – a mixing realized not only through intermarriage between distinct classes but through the topsy-turvy interchanging and confusion of the proper respective functions of those classes. The picture painted of the final age in Iranian tradition provides an exact match in this regard. The era of the final, iron *genos* in the early Greek tradition is precisely the same – the chaotic period in which the *genē* – equivalent to the Indic *varṇas* – are mingled, noble with base. In the Greek tradition, as in the Indic, this destructive “mingling” undoubtedly was not only construed as social but as functional – or dysfunctional – as in its Indo-Iranian counterpart – a result made clear in Hesiod’s prophetic depiction of the inevitable future of his

own time. Vernant's description (cited above) of that period – the “age of iron in its decline” – would apply equally well to its Indo-Iranian homologue: “essentially that of a revolt against order; an upside-down world where every hierarchy, rule, and value is inverted.”

In the early Greek tradition that Hesiod is utilizing, in its full form and at some sufficiently ancient moment, the crucial social elements of each era, which Hesiod dubs *genē*, were undoubtedly explicitly invoked (as in India) in the narrative of iron-age decline. While there are reflexes of the more ancient arrangement preserved in *Works and Days*, as we shall see, Hesiod in his account of the final age makes no such explicit reference to the *genē* affiliated with the preceding periods – and could not, perhaps, do so, given the manner in which he has recast the tradition. In effect, what Hesiod has done is to take the inherited final-age tradition of the jumbled dissolution of the elements of (i) sovereignty, (ii) war and, (iii) goods-production and to project that topos subtly and cleverly back onto the preceding periods, in keeping with his programmatic contrast of *dikē* and *hubris*. Now it is the sphere of sovereignty that is degeneratively set *against itself* through the dichotomous opposition that Hesiod creates between the golden and the “far less noble” silver *genē*: in the end Zeus destroys the silver *genos*. It is the same with the warrior element: the bronze *genos* (*hubris*) that annihilating itself sinks nameless into Hades' realm dichotomously opposed to the heroic *genos* (*dikē*). And finally, Hesiod's own ambiguous iron *genos* knows a present in which *dikē* is possible, as opposed to a future in which *hubris* will run rampant and society will unravel completely – and Zeus will again bring destruction.

More than this, Hesiod retrojects yet other final-age traits on the earlier *genē*. The peculiar birthing and childhood phenomena characteristic of that final period in the several traditions show up in the silver *genos*, which Hesiod portrays as having an overlong childhood (100 years by mother's side) followed by a very short – and sorrowful – adult life. The Greek poet foretells that there will be a lack of intergenerational resemblance in the declining iron age – “A father his children will not resemble, nor children their father.” Given the context in which the prophetic pronouncement occurs (line 182), this must certainly be construed as a consequence of the mingling of the noble and the low-born (line 179). Similarly, Hesiod declares that the silver *genos* was like the golden “neither in body nor mind” (line 129), and that the bronze was “not at all the same”¹⁹⁸ as the silver” (line 144).

Bearing in mind the Greek poet's transference of traditional final-age social dissolution to earlier ages (instrumental in elaborating his

system of dichotomies), we must revisit the (revised) translation of line 179 – the line with which we began this discussion:

But just the same, *also* among them the noble will be mingled
with the low-born.

The presence of “also” (Greek *kai* [καί]) in the line must be dictated by Hesiod’s incorporation of the topos of a mixing of noble and base, of positive and negative, among the several *genē* that precede the iron age. And not only that – for the same motif of “mixed” is conspicuously evident in the age – that intrinsically hybrid age – that immediately precedes the age of iron: that of the heroes – demigods. As Clay has reminded us, the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus writes, among his Hesiodic scholia, that “the demigods constitute . . . ‘that which is a mixture from gods and men’” – a mixing of positive and negative of another sort, that of immortal and mortal.¹⁹⁹ The contrast of the hybrid iron age of cosmic dissolution with the preceding age of the hybrid heroes functionally parallels the contrast of the two hybrid categories of the *Theogony*: Clay’s observation regarding those two groups (quoted above) would be equally applicable to the contrast of iron age with heroic: “Hesiod calls attention to the different kinds of μίξις [*mixis*], the one positive and controlled, the other destructive and disordered.”²⁰⁰

GREEK EVIDENCE: HESIOD AND HOMER The claim that iron-age intermingling is to be understood as one that occurs between elements of society (rather than simply being a mixture of good and bad experiences) is further supported by the lines that immediately follow the prophecy of children and parents not resembling one another (lines 183–4):

And neither guest to host, nor comrade to comrade,
Nor brother will be dear, as in the former time.

Each clause involves the violation of a social relationship – guests and hosts, comrades, brothers – in the time of the iron *genos*. Hesiod has enumerated and distributed these three relationships not haphazardly, but in a way that conforms to the primitive Indo-European social structure that is crucial to the ancestral myth of the ages.

Xenos and Philos: The Domain of Kings In the dissolution of the final age, a guest – Greek *xenos* (ξένος) – will no longer be dear – *philos* (φίλος) – to his host – *xenodokos* (ξενοδόκος). The guest–host relationship, a

type of institutionalized reciprocal friendship, was one of paramount importance in ancient Greece. The system provided a means whereby a stranger could be ensured lodging, personal care, and rights of protection when visiting a foreign place through the pledge of his host, who, in turn, would enjoy the same privileges whenever he might travel to the homeland of his guest. Such formalized guest–host relationships were hereditary, being extended for generations beyond the initial pledge. The practice was especially associated with kings – indeed, it was “the alternative to marriage in forging bonds between rulers”²⁰¹ – though was utilized by other aristocratic elements of archaic society as well. Mutually beneficial relationships between distant parties could thus be brokered: “In this respect a guest–friend was like a king; his worth was in direct proportion to his power.”²⁰²

Hesiod’s choice of words in these verses can be no accident. In his study of *philos* – the word translated nebulously in line 184 as ‘dear’ – and the related noun *philotēs* (φιλότης), Émile Benveniste points out there is a particular connection in Homer between *philos* and *xenos*, a connection that is so fundamental that it provides insight into the proper meaning of *philos*, a word of uncertain etymology:

The notion of *philos* expresses the behavior required by a member of the community with regard to the *xenos*, the “guest” stranger

...

The pact concluded under the name *philotēs* makes the contractual parties *philoî*: they are thereby bound to a reciprocity of services that constitute “hospitality.”²⁰³

The connection is further evidenced by the Homeric compound *philoxenos* (φιλόξενος), denoting a “hospitable” person – one “for whom the *xenos* is *philos*.”²⁰⁴ We encounter the word, for example, on the lips of shipwrecked Odysseus prior to his meeting with Nausicaa (*Odyssey* 6.120–21): awakened by the voices of the princess and other Phaeacian women, Odysseus frantically asks himself on whose shores he might have been washed up – are they a people of *hubris*, wild and without *dike*? – or are they a people that show *philos* to a *xenos* (*philoxenoî*) and whose mind is set on “revering the gods” – *theoudēs* (θεουδής)? These formulaic lines will be repeated exactly at *Odyssey* 9.175–6, when Odysseus speaks of discovering what sort of beings the Cyclopes may be, and at 13.201–2, upon his unknowing return to his homeland, Ithaca. Homer also convenes a similar assemblage of traits, negative and positive, when

Alcinous the Phaeacian king, who has warmly welcomed Odysseus into his home, asks the wanderer to tell him of the many people he has encountered in his odyssey – of those who are harsh, wild, and without *dikē*, and of those who rightly receive a stranger (*philoxenoi*) and have a god-revering (*theoudēs*) mind (*Odyssey* 8.575–6).

That one who is *philoxenos* – showing *philos* to the guest stranger – should also be said to be *theoudēs* – revering the gods – comes as no surprise; this is no haphazard concatenation of adjectives on the poet’s part. Zeus himself, sovereign deity, is at times called Zeus Xenios – “protector of suppliants and *xenoi* (guest strangers), the god who walks by the side of the esteemed *xenoi*” (*Odyssey* 9.270–71). Homer has the swineherd Eumaeus tell Odysseus – disguised as a beggar and received kindly into the herdsman’s humble hovel – that “all *xenoi* and beggars are from Zeus; my gift [hospitality] is small but *philos*” (*Odyssey* 14.57–9) – again, formulaic phrasing, uttered similarly by Nausicaa upon finding Odysseus (*Odyssey* 6.207–8).

In contrast to the Phaeacians and Eumaeus, the savage Cyclops Polyphemus, who trapped Odysseus and his men within his cave, is by no means *philoxenos*. After Odysseus reminds Polyphemus of Zeus Xenios and the god's protection of the guest stranger, the Cyclops bellows (*Odyssey* 9.273–8):

A fool you are, O *xenos*, or else you've come from far away,
 You who'd order me to fear the gods or skirt their path;
 For we Cyclopes pay no mind to aegis-bearing Zeus 275
 Nor any of the blessed gods, since better far are we than
 they;
 Nor I'd spare your life – evading Zeus's wrath –
 Your comrades' either – not unless my heart should bid me to.

As Finley observes: "The giant was to pay for his *hubris* soon enough, tricked by the superior craftiness of god-fearing Odysseus."²⁰⁵

It is the gods, and Zeus most particularly, who set the standards for the treatment of the guest stranger – for the proper social response one of *philos* toward the *xenos*.²⁰⁶ And the social relationship of *xenos* (guest stranger) and *xenodokos* (host) is one that has particular affiliations with kings – and no less so with the king of gods. We find that Hesiod has gingerly and skillfully turned his audience back to his central theme; whether Homer assumes Hesiod (as Accius thought), or Hesiod Homer, or – almost certainly – both some common tradition,²⁰⁷ the conjunction of *hubris* and *dikē* and the sphere of kings is here unmistakable.

Hesiod's prophetic message is one of the coming utter decay of right social relations within that realm – the ancient Indo-European realm of sovereignty.

Hetairos and Philos: The Domain of Warriors But it is not only the relationship of guest and host that will cease to be governed by *philos*; the right relating of comrade to comrade will likewise fall victim to social dissolution. The word translated “comrade” in line 183 is Greek *hetairos* (ἑταῖρος). Early Greek knows the term first and foremost as ‘comrade-in-arms’ – in the plural, ‘a band of warrior followers,’ such as the Myrmidons of Achilles.²⁰⁸ To return to the Phaeacians – when the hospitable Alcinous spies Odysseus weeping as a bard sings of Greeks and their vanquishing of Troy, the king wishes to know the reason for his guest's tears: did some kinsman or friend fall before the city – or some cherished *hetairos* (*Odyssey* 8.581–5)?

At the heart of Homer's *Iliad* is the tale of Achilles and his ill-fated, cherished *hetairos*, Patroclus – most *philos* to Achilles of all *hetairoi* (*Iliad* 17.411). Angry with Agamemnon for taking away his slave-lover Briseis, Achilles has withdrawn from combat and from his *hetairoi*, but allows Patroclus to put on his own (Achilles') armor and enter the fray in his stead. Patroclus, the *philos hetairos*, is brutally slain (*Iliad* 18.80). While, as West notes, “*philos hetairos* is a common expression from Homer on,”²⁰⁹ Nagy's 1999 study²¹⁰ makes clear the salient conjunctions of *hetairos* and *philos* that surround Homer's Achilles. It is the very death of Patroclus that turns Achilles back to a right relation with his *hetairoi*:²¹¹

But it is really Patroclus who restores the *philotēs* ‘state of being *philoī*’ between Achilles and the Achaeans. As Sinos points out, Patroclus will have to sacrifice himself and die so that Achilles may recognize his social obligation to his *philoī*:²¹²

...

“I did not become the Light for Patroclus or for the other *hetairoi* Who fell in great numbers at the hands of brilliant Hektor.”

(*Iliad* 18.102–3)

In Hesiod's waning iron age the *hetairos* will likewise fail to recognize “his social obligation to his *philoī*,” but – unlike the case of Homer's Achilles – there will be no redemption for the warrior. The realm of the warrior, no less than that of the sovereign, will experience a complete degeneration of right social relations as the age draws to an end.

Brother and Philos: Domain of the Goods-Producer The pattern that we see emerging in lines 183–4 is clear. The poet is explicitly invoking the three canonical Indo-European social classes in his prophetic pronouncement of the apocalyptic demise of society – the same classes whose intermingling is both a symptom and cause of that dissolution – matching point for point the Indo-Iranian tradition, *mutatis mutandis*. Thus far it is the sovereign and warrior classes whose coming loss of *philos* has been proclaimed – now it is the turn of the goods-producers – or so we would expect.

What we find in the third position, however, is the poet's lamenting of the loss of familial *philos*: "Nor brother will be *philos*, as in the former time" (line 184). But *Works and Days* is, of course, at its core centrally concerned with the loss of a brother's *philos* – and that brother is Perses – the farmer – the goods-producer.

The loss of *philos* is directed precisely at the three ancestral Indo-European social classes. We see that this "Hesiod" has exercised a certain poetic license, while at the same time remaining unmistakably faithful to inherited Indo-European ideology. We perceive a light emanating from a distant Indo-European source, refracted through the prism of archaic Greece.

CYCLICITY

Hesiod reveals himself to be heir to a deeply archaic Indo-European cosmological tradition, one that, I have argued, has its beginnings at least as early as the period of communality of the ancestors of the Greeks and Indo-Iranians. In India the tradition is plainly a cyclic one – after the final, degenerate age is destroyed, *dharma* is renewed and a new "golden" age appears; and so the process begins again. Undoubtedly the cognate Iranian tradition was the same – cyclic – until Zarathuštra and his disciples transformed it into a tradition of apocalyptic progression culminating in Ahura Mazdāh's consummation of history. A fossil of an earlier Iranian cyclicity is likely to be found in the several distinct sequential millennial stages that make up the Zoroastrian tradition.

The tradition that Hesiod knows is unmistakably a cyclic one as well – the poet plainly tells us so: he wishes that he had died before the iron age, or else been born afterward. And though the poet predicts that the close of his iron age will see a definitive end of those mortals unfortunate enough to be members of that *genos*, he encodes within *Works and Days* a message of renewal and of the restoration of order – of

the return of *dharma*. For what follows his *logos* of the ages constitutes, *grosso modo*, nothing less than a prescription for the restoration of order. After the ensuing injunctions to Perses and the kings, the remainder of the poem is a compendium of sage advice for living prosperously and in conformity with *dikē*. Though the genre generally and many of the poem's particular didactic elements find equivalents within the Near East, as demonstrated above, it is interesting that particular threads of advice have close parallels in Indic tradition. Thus, West and Nagy have pointed out that lines 727–32 and 757–9, in which Hesiod rehearses prohibitions against urinating while standing and facing the sun, while on the road, or into rivers and streams, are close to admonitions in the *Laws of Manu* 4.45–52 – a work, as we have seen, concerned with the preservation of *dharma* in a world given to unraveling.²¹³ Nagy offers an additional, highly a propos, insight:

The legal traditions of the Indic peoples are clearly cognate with those of the Greeks, and in this connection it is especially interesting to observe the uses of *memnēménos* ‘being mindful’ at *Works and Days* 728, in the specific context of the injunctions now being considered, as well as elsewhere. . . . The root *men- / *mneh₂- of *memnēménos* recurs in the Indic name *Mánu-*, meaning ‘the mindful one’: this ancestor of the human race gets his name (which is cognate with English *man*) by virtue of being mindful at a sacrifice. Manu is the prototypical sacrificer, whose sheer virtuosity in what Sylvain Lévi called “the delicate art of sacrifice” confers upon him an incontestable authority in matters of *ritual* [my emphasis]. Since sacrificial correctness is the foundation of Indic law, the entire Indic corpus of juridical/moral aphorisms is named after him.²¹⁴

Hesiod's restorative prescription for *dikē* – for *dharma* – undoubtedly was no less a matter bound up with ritual – of the performance of his gnomic epic in ritual setting – a setting of ritual empowerment.

And what of the cosmogony? Does Hesiod preserve any vestige of that Indo-European cosmogony of the primeval giant whose body is divided for the creation of the cosmos – from whose body the three strata of Indo-European society were formed? Almost certainly.

In a somewhat enigmatically²¹⁵ worded verse (line 26) in the proem of the *Theogony*, the Muses, just prior to endowing Hesiod with poetic

craft, speak to him a *muthos*, addressing him – Hesiod the shepherd – as a “belly” (*gastēr* [γαστήρ]):

Shepherds of the fields, lowly shameful things, mere bellies.

Shepherds are “lowly” – *kakos*, Theognis’ – and Hesiod’s – term for the low-born element of society. They are only “bellies” – having their origin in that lower portion of the cosmic giant’s body, source of the goods-producing class, the Indo-European herders. Whatever synchronic use “Hesiod” has made of the phrasing,²¹⁶ we must see on the diachronic axis an endpoint lying in the Indo-European cosmogony – the cosmogony that we found in India, and Iran, to be tightly interwoven with the cosmology of ages.²¹⁷

THE WARP AND WOOF OF *WORKS AND DAYS*

There is much more that could be said regarding Hesiod’s use of inherited Indo-European mythic, religious, and ritual tradition.²¹⁸ This, however, will be enough, perhaps, to persuade the reader that Indo-European traditions do indeed survive in Greece. The playful, creative use to which Hesiod puts these inherited notions and conventions and the freedom that he displays in restructuring them on the surface, while preserving what we might term underlying structures, suggests to us that this “Hesiod” is fully conversant with traditions of his Indo-European ancestors. The ease with which he navigates the ancient Indo-European ideology of social tripartition and the confident skill with which he manipulates that ideology to his own ends reveal a comfortable familiarity with it. This is not the tired reworking of a tradition borrowed from some distant place and people but the playful juggling of an inherited tradition close at hand to the poet.

At the same moment, the poet exercises the freedom to frame these inherited Indo-European materials within a form acquired from the Near East – that of the didactic discourse. Here we see clearly the process of weaving together the disparate threads that must be common to the manufacture of the fabric of Greek mythic tradition. Perhaps the weave will prove to be so tight outside of Hesiod that the individual threads cannot often be so satisfyingly identified. Or perhaps with sufficient patience and scrutiny, we may be able more broadly to tease apart the warp and woof of Greek myth.

SUGGESTED READING

Lamberton (1988) provides a helpful overview of Hesiod's works for general readers. For the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, West (1966) and (1978) are, respectively, standard commentaries, containing much valuable scholarly discussion, complemented by West (1997). Clay (2003) offers an integrated interpretation of the two poems. Hunter (2005) consists of thirteen recent articles treating various aspects of the *Catalog of Women*, within which can be found numerous references to earlier work on the topic. See, in the same volume, Richard Martin's chapter on Hesiod's *Shield*, with bibliography. For all of the preceding works, helpful scholarly treatments can be found in Janko (1982). Nagy (1990a) should be consulted for discussion of Hesiod and pan-Hellenism vis-à-vis Greek myth. For further treatment of many of the specific issues discussed above, the reader will find numerous bibliographic references within the notes.

NOTES

- 1 Gellius (3.11.1–3) also tells us that the Greek historian Ephorus (fourth century BC) held a similar chronological view, while Philochorus (fourth/third century) and Xenophanes (sixth century) contend the opposite. See also n. 2 below.
- 2 "That Hesiod is earlier than Homer is no revolutionary view; but as the reverse is taken as axiomatic by most writers, it may be worth recalling that until the latter part of the fourth century BC, Hesiod's priority was widely accepted" – so West (1966) 46–7 reminds his readers. On the relative chronology of Hesiod and other early Greek poets and on chronological issues generally, see West (1966) 40–48; West (1978) 30–33.
- 3 On Hesiod's biographic statement as literary persona, see, *inter alia*, Stoddard (2004) 1–33, with references to scholarly work of each persuasion: for the literary persona view, see especially Nagy (1982, 1990b) and Griffith (1983); for recent advocates of the biographic position, see Stein (1990) and Nelson (1998). Edwards (2004) 19–25 argues that Hesiod the poet may have constructed a herder–farmer literary persona for himself, but that "if [he] does not really belong to this group, then he has successfully fashioned a persona for *Works and Days* able to voice their perspective on the world" (p. 25).
- 4 On the process by which a more localized Greek epic could undergo diffusion to become Panhellenic and the implications of such diffusion, see, *inter alia*, Nagy (1996a, 1996b, 2003).
- 5 Nagy (1990b) 79.
- 6 Cf. West (1966) 150. West notes that the title *Theogony* is first attested in the work of the third-century Stoic, Chrysippus. On Alexandrian scholars and their contributions to the traditions of Greek mythology, see chapter seven, "Hellenistic Mythographers."

- 7 For discussion with bibliography, see West (1966) 12–16.
- 8 Janko (2001) 1. For a translation of the papyrus, see Janko, pp. 18–33.
- 9 Burkert (2004) 89–98. On the Orphic texts in general, see West (1983).
- 10 The text of the *Theogony* used herein is that of West (1966); the text of *Works and Days* is that of West (1978).
- 11 On the significance of the distinction between the Heliconian and Olympian Muses, see, *inter alia*, Nagy (1990b) 57–61; Clay (2003) 54–7. For a *structural analysis* of the *Theogony* from the perspective of Panhellenic performance, see Nagy (1990b) 53–6.
- 12 West (1966) 276–7 observes: “It is a section of extreme interest for the student of Greek religion; for seldom elsewhere do we find a Greek setting out in so full a statement his personal beliefs concerning the nature of the powers of a god.” It is something rather different, of course, for those who see in “Hesiod” a literary persona; see the discussion in Stoddard (2004) 7–15. For helpful discussion of the “Hymn to Hecate” with recent bibliography, see Clay (2003) 129–40.
- 13 The tale of Prometheus and Pandora is retold in *Works and Days* 47–105; on the variations between the two tellings, see Clay (2003) 100–128, with references to earlier work.
- 14 On the “authenticity” of the passage, as well as that of several lines at the end of the preceding section (by my division of the text), see West (1966) 356–8.
- 15 Gaea is predominantly supportive of Zeus, though Hesiod has just presented her as coupling with Tartarus to produce a creature that will overthrow Zeus, continuing the cycle of heavenly coups. Toward a resolution of this seemingly inconsistent behavior, see, *inter alia*, Clay (2003) 26–8; West (1966) 23–4.
- 16 See Burkert (2004) 35–7, (1992) 90, who emphasizes the similarity of the *Iliad* passage and the division of the cosmos into three parts found in the Mesopotamian *Atrahasis* (for translations of various versions, see Foster (2005) 227–80). Burkert (2004) 37 observes: “No other passage in Homer comes so close to being a translation of the Akkadian epic.” Mondi (1990) 165 finds a Canaanite parallel in a Ugaritic tradition that presents the gods Baal, Yam, and Mot as “manifested, respectively, in the cosmic realms of the atmosphere, the sea, and the lower world of the dead.”
- 17 For a summary of the evidence for this position, see West (1966) 397–9.
- 18 West (1966) 398–9; Northrup (1983) – each with certain caveats.
- 19 Nagy (1990b) 80.
- 20 From a formal perspective, Nagy argues, the entire *Theogony* up to line 963 is “a hymn to the Muses, serving as a prelude to the catalogue of heroes and heroines that survives at verse 965–1020 [on which, see below]. . . . Thus verses 1–963 of the *Theogony* are not a single, but rather a composite, hymn in comparison with most Homeric *Hymns*”; Nagy (1990b) 56.
- 21 On the *Catalog of Women*, see Hunter (2005); Clay (2003) 164–74.
- 22 For a balanced assessment of the causes of this *lapsus*, see Burkert (1992) 1–7, with further references.
- 23 For broad and reliable treatments of Near Eastern influences on early Greece, see especially Burkert (2004, 1992) and West (1997).
- 24 This is not to suggest that all Classicists have become ardent students of the Near East and its formative influences. West (1997) x captures it well: “The discovery in the thirties and forties of the Hurro-Hittite Kumarbi mythology, with its

- undeniable anticipations of Hesiod's *Theogony*, finally forced Hellenists to accept the reality of Near Eastern influence on early Greek literature. Since then they have shown themselves increasingly tolerant of oriental comparisons, if not particularly active in investigating the oriental literatures for themselves. The outstanding exception is Walter Burkert, whose work will have opened many people's eyes." For an argument in favor of Hesiod's "kingship-in-heaven" tradition having an Indo-European antecedent, see Allen (2004).
- 25 For a summary account of the discovery and (ongoing) excavation of Boğazköy, see Güterbock (1997).
 - 26 On the Hurrians and their non-Indo-European language, see Wilhelm (2004).
 - 27 Three of the texts explicitly preserve the designation "song"; for others it is reasonably inferred. See Hoffner (1990) 38.
 - 28 See Hoffner (1990) 38, with references to earlier work on the several texts.
 - 29 The translation is that of Hoffner (1990) 41.
 - 30 One *AMMATU* is probably 0.5 meters; thirty of these units make one *IKU*; see Hoffner (1990) 82.
 - 31 Hoffner (1990) 54.
 - 32 Hittite is written with a cuneiform script consisting chiefly of syllabic (phonetic) characters; but Sumerian logograms (transliterated with Roman capitals) and frozen Akkadian syllabic spellings (Akkadograms – transliterated with italic capitals) are employed as well. On the Hittite writing system and its transliteration, see Watkins (2004) 552–5.
 - 33 On the reconstruction of the text of the Song of Silver, see Hoffner (1990) 45–8 and Hoffner (1988).
 - 34 See Hoffner (1988) 164: "Classical mythology is full of examples of mortals sired by gods from mortal women. And we know of at least one good example of this in one version of the Hattian–Hittite myth of Illuyanka. . . . Silver might have been such an offspring of god and woman." On the dragon Illuyanka, see Hoffner (1990) 9–14; on Illuyanka vis-à-vis Typhoeus, see Watkins (1995) 448–59.
 - 35 There is likely another feature that binds together these two gods. The Hurrian deity Kumarbi is a god of grain; see West (1997) 280, (1966) 204–5. What little evidence there is for identifying the nature of Cronus beyond his theogonic role – chiefly the celebration of his festival, the Cronia, following harvest – suggests he was an agrarian deity as well.
 - 36 Mondi (1990) 155–6 notes Egyptian parallels to the swallowing of deities and, following Meltzer (1974), impregnation by blood that is shed from the genitals of a god. For parallels between the Orphic cosmogony and Egyptian traditions, see Burkert (2004) 93–98.
 - 37 One of whom is named KA.ZAL 'shining face' and is born out of Kumarbi's head when some other deity cracks open the latter's skull. On the striking similarity of this account to the birth of "flashing-eyed" Athena out of Zeus's split skull (*Theogony* 924–5), see Hoffner (1975) 138, with further references. It is commonly Hephaestus who is credited with splitting Zeus' skull, as in Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 7.35–8.
 - 38 At points, the Orphic theogony bears even closer resemblance to the Hittite tradition than does the Hesiodic; see Burkert (2004) 92–3.
 - 39 Hoffner (1975) 138–9 discusses the alternating sequence of Hittite divine kings.

- 40 Hoffner (1990) 39. I have modified Hoffner's transliteration of some names to conform with the transliterations otherwise used herein.
- 41 As it is in Homer; see *Iliad* 5.749–52 and the remarks in Kirk (1990) 136.
- 42 The translation is adapted from Woodard, in press.
- 43 On Akkadian *titu* 'clay' as the possible source of Greek *Tītēnes*, see Burkert (2004) 33–4; (1992) 38, 95.
- 44 West (1966) 201. On various Near Eastern traditions of gods imprisoned in the Netherworld, see Burkert (2004) 33; (1992) 94. West (1997) 298 compares the Titans, whom Hesiod also refers to as "former gods" (*Theogony* 424, 486) to "the Hittite 'Former Gods' (*karuilies siunes*). . . ." The first occurrence is found in the Hecate passage and is, specifically, a reference to Cronus' treatment of Hecate with regard to her proper share among the "former Titan gods." The second reference again entails Cronus, and editors disagree as to how "former" is to be construed – "former king of the gods" or "king of the former gods."
- 45 In his account of the event, the (AD) fifth-century Egyptian Greek writer, Nonnus (*Dionysiaca* 1.481–534), identifies the rescuer as the Phoenician Cadmus.
- 46 In certain other details Apollodorus' account of Typhon (Typhoeus) also shows particular similarity to the Hittite tradition. For example, he situates the creature's birth in Cilicia, a region of Anatolia (home of the Hittites), and his physical description of Typhon's gargantuan size – towering above mountains, his head reaching to the very stars – is particularly reminiscent of the depiction of the stone giant in the Song of Ullikummi.
- 47 There are, however, in regard to the intervening Hittite episodes, some enticing elements in the Hesiodic text. While considered in isolation they appear to have little comparative value, but when considered as features within manifestly parallel structures, they may take on greater significance.

What does intervene between the Titanomachy and the birth of Typhoeus? Hesiod's description of the Netherworld and attentiveness to its inhabitants (lines 736–819): Atlas, the giant who supports the heavens on his head and arms; Nyx and Hemera; Hypnos and Thanatos; three-headed Cerberus; the river Styx. Just so, Hittite LAMMA, Silver, and Hedammu (the focus of attention in the Hittite texts) are all denizens of the Netherworld. And while there is no Hittite description of that place, it is tantalizing – bearing in mind that these intervening texts are only fragmentarily preserved – that in the surviving bits of the Song of Hedammu, Kumarbi sends explicit direction to the Sea God to journey to him through the Netherworld, "below river and earth" – a trek that will follow such a course that the Sea God will come up exactly below the seat of Kumarbi. Not only is he to do so in order to avoid detection by the Sun and Moon Gods, but so that the gods of the "Dark Earth" will not see him as well. The notion of a subterranean journey clearly suggests a Netherworld geography and, more particularly, a (vertical?) complexity to the Netherworld such that the Sea God can travel there unseen by even the chthonic deities.

In his description (*Theogony* 758–66) of the children of Nyx 'Night' – Hypnos 'Sleep' and Thanatos 'Death' and their goings forth – Hesiod says that Helios, the sun, never looks on Sleep (gentle and kind) and pitiless Death (iron-hearted and bronze-hearted) as he arches from horizon to horizon (lines 759–61). It would seem a curious statement – do Sleep and Death only come upon mortals at night? (cf. the remarks of Caldwell (1987) 70, n. 756–66) – and more curious still in

- that Helios is frequently said to see all things. One must compare *Odyssey* 11:17–18, where Homer tells that the city of the Cimmerians, by the entrance to the Netherworld, blanketed in clouds and mist, is never seen by Helios, and allow that what Hesiod is claiming is, somewhat similarly, that the sun's rays never fall upon the Netherworld home of Sleep and Death (see West (1966) 368–9; Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 71–9). But one might also ponder an episode from one of the fragments of the Song of Silver, in which that Netherworld personification of metal pulls down the Sun and Moon from heaven, who then pay Silver homage and beg that he spare their lives, lest, with their lights extinguished, the lands that he governs be governed in darkness.
- 48 The tradition of the Gigantomachy is, however, far older than Apollodorus and his *Bibliotheca*. From the sixth century BC on, it is a common theme of Greek art; see Schefold (1992) 54–67.
- 49 Apollodorus 1.6.1; adapted from Woodard, in press.
- 50 For an English translation of the Enūma Eliš see, *inter alia*, Foster (2005) 436–86 and ANET (Speiser), pp. 60–72, from which latter source the quotations of the text appearing here have been drawn.
- 51 Burkert (2004) 30–32, (1992) 92–3 explores the possibility that Greek *Tēthys* [Τηθύς] ‘Tethys’, the name of the Titan consort of Oceanus and mother of rivers, is derived from Akkadian *Taw(a)tu*, ‘sea’, one form of the name *Tiamat* that occurs in the Enūma Eliš. On this etymological connection, see West (1997) 147–8, especially 147, n.200. In a cosmogonic passage in the *Iliad* (14.200–204), Burkert (2004) 30 notes, “Hera says that she is going to Oceanus, ‘origin of the gods,’ and Tethys the ‘mother’; later on Oceanus is even called ‘the origin of all’.” This alternative theogony, in which Oceanus and Tethys are the primeval couple, appears to resurface in an Orphic verse rehearsed by Plato (*Cratylus* 402B); see Janko (1994) 181, with additional bibliography.
- 52 Foster (2005) 444, n. 1.
- 53 For a possible surfacing of this Babylonian motif in Homeric epic, see West (1997) 222.
- 54 For other discussions of Babylonian parallels to Hesiod's *Theogony*, again fundamentally sympathetic to the present treatment, see, *inter alia*, Littleton (1970) 109–15; Walcot (1966) 27–54; West (1997) 280–3, (1966) 22–4.
- 55 For the text of the myth, see, *inter alia*, Foster (2005) 489–91; ANET (Grayson), pp. 517–18; Lambert and Walcot (1965).
- 56 For further discussion of the Dunnu theogony, see Littleton (1970) 112–14; Lambert and Walcot (1965); Walcot (1966) 41–2.
- 57 The name appears to be actual Phoenician – Šakkūnyātōn, meaning ‘the god Šakkun gave’; see West (1994) 294, n. 20, with additional references.
- 58 Philo's text is known chiefly through the work of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, the fourth-century Christian apologist and historian. The text used herein is that of Jacoby, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (FGrH), reprinted in Baumgarten (1981), in which work an English translation with commentary can also be found.
- 59 For discussion of these lines and their intended meaning, see, *inter alia*, Baumgarten (1981) 68–74, 77–82. Philo's reference may be to the script of the Ammonites, a Canaanite people closely related to the Hebrews and Phoenicians, and especially to the Edomites and Moabites.
- 60 For discussion of the term, see Baumgarten (1981) 183–5.

- 61 On the three, see, *inter alia*, Baumgarten (1981) 189–90, 202–3. El and Dagon are well-known deities among various West Semitic peoples (of whom the Phoenicians are one); Baitylos is otherwise attested through several sources, including a Phoenician treaty.
- 62 For a summary of the evidence, see Baumgarten (1981) 195–7.
- 63 On the reading “or Hadad” see Baumgarten (1981) 196, 215, 219.
- 64 For bibliography, see West (1994) 294.
- 65 See Baumgarten (1981) *passim*, but especially pp. 261–7.
- 66 For discussion of additional similarities, see West (1997) 285–6.
- 67 Other Indo-European cultures do know a form of the myth: notably, that version found in the Persian *Shāh-nāmeḥ* (‘Book of Kings’), written by the poet Ferdowsī (Abū Ol-Qasem Manṣūr) in the tenth and eleventh centuries AD, and that of the *Prose Edda*, a work by the twelfth-century Iclander, Snorri Sturluson. Both are most likely borrowed. On the kingship-in-heaven tradition and its occurrence in Indo-European works, see Littleton (1970). See also Allen (2004) and comments in n. 24 above.
- 68 Prior to the acquisition of the Phoenician script, the Greeks had written with the syllabic script called Linear B during the mid- to late second millennium BC, and Cypriot Greeks continued to use a related syllabic writing system well into the alphabetic period; see Woodard (1997) *passim*.
- 69 See Woodard (1997) 133–62.
- 70 On which, see, *inter alia*, Karageorghis (2002); Walz (1997); Reyes (1994).
- 71 West (1994) argues that it is a Phoenician cosmogony that underlies not only variously reported Greek cosmogonic traditions but the cosmogonic doctrines of early Ionian philosophers as well.
- 72 West (1978) 151; Gagarin (1986) 107–9. For a recent examination of Hesiod’s depiction of the kings with references to earlier work, see Edwards (2004) 64–73.
- 73 Gagarin (1986) 46–9; see also Nagy (1990b) 64.
- 74 “The problem is not only that the princes are arbitrary, arrogant, or careless. . . . Rather, Hesiod’s charge of gift swallowing implies that they have deliberately chosen to deviate from known standards of fair and equitable judgment for one of two reasons: Either because of an illegitimate acceptance of gifts (*qua* bribes) from some interested party or because they accept the gifts traditionally offered to judges by disputants without rendering straight judgment in return”; Ober (2005) 399.
- 75 For further interpretative specifics, see Gagarin (1974), with references to earlier work. See also Clay (2003) 34–7.
- 76 The translation is adapted from Woodard, in press.
- 77 Hesiod devotes 17 lines to the gold race, 16 to the silver, 13 to the bronze, and 28 to the iron.
- 78 On which see West (1978) 203.
- 79 Nemesis is the deification of anger at things unjust; Aidos, respect for another.
- 80 Nagy (1990b) 66 makes it clear:

The ‘moral’ of the fable about the hawk and the nightingale hereby becomes explicit: the hawk/king who threatens to devour the nightingale/poet as proof of his power is utterly disqualified as an exponent of *dikē* ‘justice’. Moreover, since only those kings who are *phronēontes* ‘aware’ will understand the fable (202; cf. the idealized kings at *Theogony* 88, who are *eképhrones* ‘aware’), the greedy kings are

implicitly disqualified even from understanding the ‘moral,’ in view of their general ignorance (see *Works and Days* 40–41). And if the kings cannot be exponents of *dike*, they are utterly without authority and their *raison d’être* is annihilated. In fact, after verse 263, the kings are never heard of again in the *Works and Days*.

- 81 West (1997) 319–20, (1978) 204; Perry (1965) xxviii–xxxiv. For a general discussion of the Greek fable within a context of Near Eastern influence, see Burkert (1992) 120–124.
- 82 Perry (1965) xxxiii. Perry summarizes the Babylonian fable on pp. xxxii–xxxiii; for the Greek equivalent, which has substituted a bull for the elephant, see Perry p. 103.
- 83 Ebeling (1927) 50.
- 84 Walcot (1966) 90
- 85 ETCSL translation: t.6.1.08 (etcs1.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcs1.cgi?text=t.6.1.08).
- 86 The fable is itself akin to the Sumerian debate texts – texts pitting animals, plants, elements, and so forth against one another – such as the *The Debate between Bird and Fish*. See Black et al. (2004) 225–40 for discussion of the debate genre and the similarity between the heron-and-turtle fable and debate texts.
- 87 The translation is that of Black et al. (2004) 238.
- 88 West (1978) 3–22.
- 89 Chadwick and Chadwick (1986).
- 90 West (1978) 28.
- 91 The translation is that of Black et al. (2004) 285.
- 92 The proper placement and construal of this line is a matter of scholarly disagreement; see West (1978) 329–30.
- 93 Šamaš is the Akkadian sun-god.
- 94 The translation is that of Foster (2005) 412–13.
- 95 The translation of the Biblical text here and throughout this work is that of the *New English Bible*.
- 96 For a summary of the history of Egyptian wisdom literature, see Ray (1995).
- 97 On the *Instructions of Amen-em-Opet* and affiliations with Hesiod and the book of Proverbs, see Walcot (1966) 86–7; West (1997) 94; Eissfeldt (1965) 474–5. John A. Wilson (ANET, p. 421) observes: “Amem-em-Opet differs from earlier Egyptian books of wisdom in its humbler, more resigned, and less materialistic outlook.” Some scholars have argued that Amem-em-Opet was itself influenced by the Hebrew proverbs, though this seems currently to be a view not widely held; see, however, the observations of Ray (1995) 24.
- 98 That is, a person who is mentally disabled.
- 99 That is, persons who would harm the one being addressed.
- 100 The translation is that appearing in ANET (Wilson), p. 424.
- 101 On the possible influence of Hesiod on *Ankhseshongy*, see Walcot 1966 (88) with reference to his earlier work on the problem. On other influential elements – Greek and Aramaic – see Ray (1995) 26.
- 102 On the *Wisdom of Ahiqar* see Harris et al. (1913); Lindenberger (1983); Greenfield (1995). Referring to the comparative study of Lichteim (1983), Greenfield (1995) 50 notes, “It is with the Syriac and Armenian versions that the important Demotic wisdom collection called ‘The Instruction of Ankhseshongy’ has definite ties.”

- 103 West (1978) 28.
- 104 West (1978) 174.
- 105 West (1978) 174.
- 106 For an English translation of the Pahlavi texts discussed here, see West (1995) 1:191–235; 4:180–81.
- 107 The account of seven ages also survives in a Persian poem of the thirteenth century AD, the *Zardušt-nāmeḥ*. For the poem see Rosenberg 1904.
- 108 For discussion of variant forms of this millennial chronology, see West (1995) 1:xlvi–lv; Boyce (1996) 285–293.
- 109 Sanskrit *dharma*, which I choose to leave untranslated, is a semantically multifaceted notion, at the heart of which is ‘order’. In the Introduction to their translation of the Sanskrit *Laws of Manu* (the *Manavadharmaśāstra*; on which, see below) – a work fundamentally concerned with the maintenance of *dharma* in a world in which chaos always threatens – Doniger and Smith (1991) xvii write of this text: “It is about *dharma*, which subsumes the English concepts of ‘religion’, ‘duty’, ‘law’, ‘right’, ‘justice’, ‘practice’, and ‘principle’.”
- 110 The graying of humans receives explicit mention in Mārkaṇḍeya’s first list of the symptoms of the *kaliyuga* in 3.186; there boys are said to father offspring when 10 or 12, and girls conceive at 7 or 8. In 3.188 the corresponding ages are given as 7 or 8 and 5 or 6.
- 111 West (1997) 314; West (1978) 176, in which he writes: “The antediluvian kings reign for periods ranging from 10,800 to 72,000 years, and the great destruction of the Flood marks this off as a distinct historical age. The kings of the first dynasties after the Flood have much shorter reigns, but still of up to 1,200 years.”
- 112 Koenen (1994) 14–18 seeks to show a similarity between Hesiod’s prophetic language and certain Egyptian prophetic texts, as well as Mesopotamian, but points out that “in the early Near Eastern cultures, however, we have found no trace of four ages named after metals” (p. 24). He believes, however, that Egypt and the Near East provided both the Greeks and the Iranians with the idea of cyclic time, as well as an apocalyptic tradition, passed along to India (see especially pp. 12–14, 34). Koenen seems to stand alone in this imagined course of transmission, as he acknowledges (see p. 13, with nn. 26 and 28). No such influence needs to be posited; a primitive Indo-European concept of temporal cyclicity appears virtually certain, as revealed by comparative analysis of Celtic and Indo-Iranian traditions; see, in this regard, the comments of Lincoln (1986) 217, n. 24.

Some investigators, such as Koenen, have expressed concern over the “late” date of the Zoroastrian documents. The date is not a problem as far as the comparative value of the Iranian materials is concerned. The *comparative method*, in its application to both Indo-European linguistic and sociocultural data, is a powerful methodology, able to pierce deep into Indo-European antiquity from much shallower and variegated chronological levels (see my remarks in Woodard [2006] 32–5). The Sanskrit language, for example, though not attested in writing until c. mid-second century AD, shows many close linguistic similarities to Bronze-Age Greek and is a cornerstone in the reconstruction of the Proto-Indo-European language of the fifth millennium BC. As Dumézil (1995) 95–101, following Wikander (1947), demonstrated, certain primitive Indo-European elements find expression in the epic *Mahābhārata* that are not attested in the much-earlier-composed Vedas.

It may also be instructive to recall that the earliest extant manuscript of *Works and Days* is of medieval date (see West [1978] 75–86).

- 113 Dumézil (1987) 165.
- 114 Dumézil (1973) 37.
- 115 See especially Nagy (1990b) *passim*; Watkins (1995) *passim*.
- 116 Consider, for example, the Homeric traditions of the “Judgment of Paris” (see Dumézil [1995] 608–14) and the figure of Heracles as a “triple-sinning warrior” (see Dumézil [1983; 1970]). Several of Dumézil’s later “100 essays” (published collectively as Dumézil [2003]) treat Greek topics – particularly several of the initial twenty-five that appeared in 1982 under the title *Apollon sonore*. Among the work of Dumézil’s disciples, consider, *inter alia*, Yoshida’s (1964) study of the shield of Heracles.
- 117 The work appears most recently in the 2006 republication of Vernant’s *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* by Zone Books. Compare Vernant’s further thoughts on a structural analysis of Hesiod in chapters two and three of that volume.
- 118 For discussion, see Woodard (2006) especially pages 14–20; there I write:

... as early as 1932, the French linguist Émile Benveniste had begun independently to explore and develop his own interpretation of Indo-European social classes. The most succinct expression of Benveniste’s conclusions is to found in his masterful work treating primitive Indo-European economy, society, law and religion, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (1969); therein (as earlier) Benveniste argues for a similar hierarchically-ordered, three-part social structure. ... The structure is most readily perceived among the Indo-Iranian peoples, and indeed, in the research path followed by both Benveniste and Dumézil the reconstruction of an ancestral structure was first projected to Proto-Indo-Iranian society (see Benveniste 1932; Dumézil 1930).
- 119 On binary opposition generally in early Greek poetry, see the remarks of Nagy in Chapter 1 of the present volume.
- 120 See, *inter alia*, McKay (1963); cf. the remarks of West (1978) 236–7. At *Works and Days* 498–501 the poet suggests a contrast between an empty or bad hope (*elpis* [ἐλπίς]) and a more positive one.
- 121 Clay (2003) 123. And consider also Berg (1976) 19, who observes: “Similarly, the woman of the *Erga*-myth is called *Pandora*, ‘All-giving’, though Hesiod is quick to turn the etymology around and insist that it means ‘Gifted by All (the Gods)’ (81–2).”
- 122 See, *inter alia*, Marquardt (1982) 285–7; West (1978) 165–6.
- 123 Clay (2003) 121.
- 124 Clay (1993) 108. The tradition of the shared eye and tooth is first attested by Pherecydes (West [1966] 245), an historian of the fifth century BC whose work survives only in fragments; for his Graeae text, see Fowler (2000) 280, line 15 – 281, line 3.
- 125 Clay (1993) 116.
- 126 Clay (1993) 115.
- 127 Thus, see Berg (1976), especially 17–19.
- 128 Lines 124–5, in which the *daimones* are described, are identical to lines 254–5, lines that describe the actions of Zeus’s invisible spies. Some scholars, such as West (1978) 183, propose that the earlier lines (124–5) were copied from the latter by

- a post-Hesiodic hand. Vernant (1983a) 10–11 suggests that there is an intentional link between the golden age *daimones* and the spies of the divine sovereign Zeus.
- 129 Vernant (1983a) 11.
- 130 Vernant (1983a) 12. He also argues (p. 16) for extending the parallelism by comparing Hesiod's bronze age to the race of giants born from Gaea – whom Apollodorus describes as going to war against Olympus.
- 131 Vernant (1983a) 7.
- 132 Vernant (1983a) 12.
- 133 Vernant (1983a) 16.
- 134 Vernant (1983a) 16.
- 135 Vernant (1983a) 17.
- 136 See, for example, Dumézil (1992) 176–7.
- 137 Vernant (1983a) 9.
- 138 Vernant (1983a) 19.
- 139 Vernant (1983a) 20.
- 140 Vernant (1983a) 23 concludes: “This is where Hesiod's profound originality lies and this is what makes him a true religious reformer, comparable in manner and inspiration to certain prophets of Judaism.”
- 141 For discussion of the Babylonian Exile and its aftermath, see, *inter alia*, Mitchell (1991).
- 142 It is reminiscent of both the story of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel in Chapter Two, in which Daniel interprets the dream of the giant with head of gold and feet of clay, and the story of Chapter Four, in which Daniel interprets yet another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (in which he saw a great tree), after which the king is driven into the wilderness and goes mad, but after seven years is healed as he calls upon the God of the Jews. See the discussions in Salvesen (1998) 149; Mitchell (1991) 417–18, 425–6; Ackroyd (1968) 36–8.
- 143 Oppenheim (1977) 150.
- 144 See ANET (Oppenheim), p. 562.
- 145 On Nabonidus, see Wiseman (1991) 243–51. On his relationship with Cyrus, his Persian deposer, see also Mallowan (1985) 408–15.
- 146 See ANET (Oppenheim), p. 562.
- 147 Mitchell (1991) 425–26.
- 148 Though Herodotus and Xenophon present the Persian takeover as involving greater bloodshed than do the Mesopotamian sources.
- 149 Mallowan (1985) 408–9.
- 150 Dandamaev (1991) 256, who continues, “It can be noted incidentally that a letter of the early sixth century BC mentions the arrest of several Babylonians whose father and brother had fled to Media. As can be seen from the same letter, several other Babylonians had fled to Media, and the king's order for them to return remained unanswered.”
- 151 See Wiseman (1991) 248–9; see also Mallowan (1985) 411–12.
- 152 Mitchell (1991) 430, 436–7; Mallowan (1985) 409, 411–12.
- 153 On the various dialects and historical stages of Aramaic, see Creason (2004) 391–3.
- 154 Montgomery (1979) 20–22.
- 155 Mitchell (1991) 427; Kutscher (1970) 399–403.
- 156 Davies (1976) 399.
- 157 See Russell (1964) 19 and *passim*.

- 158 Montgomery (1979) 186.
- 159 The differences extend to at least the early twentieth century; see the discussion in Montgomery (1979) 188–9.
- 160 As in, for example, Hartman and Di Lella (1978) 146.
- 161 See, *inter alia*, Clackson (2004) 922; Burrow (1955) 15–16.
- 162 Republished in Heitsch (1966); see pp. 457–8.
- 163 Sanskrit *viśvavedas* (‘all-knowing’) is also used of Dyaus, the Indic deity cognate with Greek Zeus; see West (1978) 223–4 for the comparison and for a discussion of the Sun and its relationship to all-seeing Zeus in Greece and to Indic Mitra and Varuṇa, and to Iranian Ahura Mazdāh: “Hesiod’s Zeus with his spies and his all-seeing Eye, and Homer’s Sun [‘who sees all things and hears all things’] (*Iliad* 3.277, invoked together with Zeus in swearing an oath...) are evidently fragmented survivals of this Indo-European system.”
- 164 West (1978) 219. Added to this cluster of shared Greek and Indo-Iranian features appearing within this delimited portion of *Works and Days* is Hesiod’s use of *ōkupetēs* (ὤκυπτετης) ‘swiftly flying’ to describe the hawk of his fable; Homer uses the adjective only of horses, “but the etymological equivalent *āsūpātva* is applied to a hawk in *Rig Veda* 4.26.4. . . .” (West [1978] 209). Also worth noting is what Herodotus (1.132) reports about Persian sacrificial practice: when a sacrificial victim has been dismembered and its flesh cooked, the various portions are placed on top of grass that has been scattered in the sacrificial space, whereupon a Magus approaches and chants a *theogony*.
- 165 On Zoroastrian dualism, see, *inter alia*, Boyce (1996) 192–3, 198–200.
- 166 By “cognate” I mean that Avestan *aša* : Sanskrit *ṛta* and Avestan *drug* : Sanskrit *druh* each have a common origin in the parent Proto-Indo-Iranian language.
- 167 On the Indo-European cosmogony see, *inter alia*, Mallory and Adams (1997) 129–30; Lincoln (1986).
- 168 For further elaboration, see Lincoln (1986), especially chapters 1, 2, and 7.
- 169 For the Pahlavi text, see West (1995) 3:118–119.
- 170 Pahlavi *vāstryōših*, from the Avestan compound *vāstryō ššuyant*.
- 171 Benveniste (1969) 1:279, 288.
- 172 On the *Škend Gumānīg Vizār* and other Iranian variants, see Lincoln (1986) 146–148. Of especial relevance are traditions concerning Iranian Yima (which cannot be discussed here), the first king, whose name is cognate with that of Norse Ymir; on Yima, see also Lincoln (1997).
- 173 For the text, see West (1995) 3:118.
- 174 See Fontenrose (1974) 3–5.
- 175 Fontenrose (1974) 4. West (1978) would disagree, stating that “Hesiod was the sole source for later Greek and Roman writers” (p. 177). But consequent to this position, he must append the claim that Hesiod’s “attempt to historicize [the myth] by incorporating the Heroic Age was abandoned in favour of the strictly regular mythical scheme.” If Hesiod were the only source for later Greek and Roman writers, how would they have known that his version was one that had been altered and historicized by the inserting of the age of heroes (and have universally deleted the same)? It is a cumbersome hypothesis – made much more so by the particular similarity of Ovid’s account to the Indo-Iranian traditions – and one that this learned scholar seems to have moved away from in West (1997), where he writes, “We may note in passing certain features which appear here and there in

later Greek and Roman accounts of the Golden Age, though not in Hesiod, and which have Near Eastern parallels" (p. 314).

Ovid offers an account of the Gigantomachy, placing it immediately after his report of the iron age. Within the context of the myth of world ages, his description of the giants and the aftermath of their defeat seems teasingly familiar in light of the Indo-European cosmogony encountered above, with its cosmic giant whose dismembered body gave rise to the cosmos and the classes of human society. Ovid's giants have serpent feet and a hundred hands (*Metamorphoses* 1.183–4); when they are vanquished by Zeus, the primeval earth-goddess, Terra, creates from the bloody carnage a race of living beings of human form (156–62). Puruṣa, the butchered cosmic giant of Indic tradition, is described as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet (*Rig Veda* 10.90.1). More overt in this connection is Ovid's unique account of how the giant Atlas was transformed into a mountain (*Metamorphoses* 4.655–62); see Lincoln (1986) 10.

- 176 For the text of Aratus' myth, see Kidd (1997) 78–83, with associated commentary.
- 177 Among other versions of the myth mentioned by Fontenrose (1974) are those of the Roman poets Horace (*Epodes* 16.41–66) and Juvenal (6.1–24). Horace makes oblique reference to the golden, bronze, and iron ages in verses extolling the glories of the Elysian Isles. Juvenal begins his sixth satire by rehearsing the nature of life in a bygone day, presumably the golden age, and concluding this passage with explicit, if brief, reference to the silver and iron ages. It was in the silver age, writes Juvenal (line 24), that adultery first appeared (all other sins appearing in the iron age; line 23). The remark is intriguing if the poet should prove to be preserving some more ancient tradition, given the Indo-Iranian affiliation of the second age with the second stratum of society, the warrior class. Dumézil identified a prominent Indo-European mythic figure that he called the triple-sinning warrior – the warrior who sins against each of the three canonical elements of Indo-European society. The warrior's sin in the realm of the goods-producers (Dumézil's third function) commonly entails an adulterous act; see, *inter alia*, Dumézil 1970 and 1983.
- 178 The Indic use of white, red, yellow, and black to identify the sequential *yugas* is not simply a matter of the ages being represented by "metallic colors," as some investigators have supposed (see, for example, Koenen [1994] 13). The use of color (*varṇa*) to symbolize the social classes is a Common Indo-Iranian phenomenon and one that has its roots in an earlier and more broadly attested Indo-European practice; see Dumézil (1992) 104–6, with references to earlier work.
- 179 Blakely (2007) 26, with extensive bibliography.
- 180 Blakely (2007) 27, n. 71 writes: "All meteors have some iron content, ranging from the siderites, which are 100% iron and nickel, to stony-iron siderolites, which are 50% iron and 50% silicate, and stony (aerolites), which are 10–15% iron and nickel, mixed with 85–90% silicates. Only one in ten meteors is a siderite. . . ."
- 181 As also in the *Zardušt-nāmeḥ* (see n. 107 above). Boyce (1984) 71 interprets the phrase as a reference to iron still mixed with dross. She sees in the term an allusion to the mixture of good and evil in the fourth age – perhaps a necessary interpretation à la Hesiod, one could imagine, given her view that the Iranian world-ages tradition was acquired from the Greeks (pp. 70, 72). Boyce herself, however – inaccurately typifying the Greek final age as only "a fourth age of simple iron, which was in fact a prized and handsome metal" (p. 72) – views the "mixed" status from a Zoroastrian perspective: "for dualist Zoroastrians the concept of a mixture of good

and evil is an ever-present one, indeed the whole of this existence is characterized in their holy texts as the time of 'mixture' (*gumēzishn*), . . ." (p. 72). As we have already noted and will soon consider again, Hesiod also describes an iron age that is "mixed."

- 182 West (1978) 198. Though West does not advocate excising the lines from the text, as certain others before him had, but sagely advises: "We had better take the text as it stands, and try to understand how Hesiod came to write it so."
- 183 West (1978) 198: "It was a tenet of popular wisdom that human life is either a mixture of good and bad or wholly bad." See also West (1966) 334.
- 184 Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 262. Compare Helen's words at *Odyssey* 4.236–7: "But now to one and now to another, Zeus gives both good and ill."
- 185 "The language of the whole passage is untypical," writes Richardson (1993) 331.
- 186 The translation is that of Foster (2005) 395.
- 187 The translation is that of Foster (2005) 397.
- 188 The translation is that of Foster (2005) 399.
- 189 On the dating of Theogonis see West (1993) xiv and, especially, West (1974) 65–71. For additional points of agreement between Hesiod and Theognis see Nagy (1985).
- 190 Also called Cyrnus; this is a young male to whom many of Theognis' poems are addressed.
- 191 Fontenrose (1974) 1, n. 1 writes, for example:

"Age" is, I grant, a not wholly satisfactory translation of *genos*, which means "stock" or "breed" in this text; but these words will hardly do for translation or discussion (can we talk about Hesiod's "golden stock"?); and "race" must be rejected altogether as both misleading and inaccurate. "Generation" is one meaning of *genos*, but is surely unsuitable for the myth, since each *genos* obviously consisted of several generations in the usual sense of the term.

Similarly, Koenen (1994) 2, n. 3 observes:

In the following pages I shall try to avoid the term "races" because of the restrictive sense in which the term is used in our vernacular. But "age," the word I shall use, is not precisely what Hesiod had in mind. He does not talk about the creation of periods of time, but about the human beings who lived in specific periods of their own.

- 192 Gerber (1999) 201; West (1993) 68.
- 193 Wender (1973) 103.
- 194 Fowler (1992) 95.
- 195 Mulroy (1992) 173.
- 196 On *genos* and its position within the structure of Indo-European society, see especially Benveniste (1969) 1:257–8, 314–16.
- 197 I have, of course, in the present treatment completely skirted the issue of a possible fourth Indo-European class, i.e., in Dumézilian terms, a "fourth function," on which see, *inter alia*, Allen (1996, 1987). Allen argues for a fourth function that is characterized by "two aspects, one positive or transcendent (F4 +), one negative and excluded (F4 –)" (Allen [2000] 279). Thus, in a certain sense, Allen's fourth function can be characterized as *mixed*, and in this regard his analysis may well have relevance to the fourth, mixed age of Indo-Iranian and Greek tradition. Particularly germane to the topic at hand is his treatment of an Iranian (pre-Islamic Afghan)

- catastrophe tradition in Allen (2000), in which work he makes reference to the Hesiodic scheme of world ages, though his chief concern is with flood traditions.
- 198 The word here (line 144) translated ‘same’ is Greek *homoios* (ὁμοῖος). In line 182 – “A father his children will not resemble, nor children their father” – the word translated ‘resemble’ is *homoios* (ὁμοῖος), which Hesiod uses for the former word, *homoios*. As West (1978) 199 notes, according to the ancient scholia on Hesiod, the particular sense of *homoios* is “‘at one with’, or ‘physically similar’ in consequence of marital fidelity.” The intended nuance in line 182 is undoubtedly the latter, in light of the comparative and Greek-internal evidence adduced above. West, however, inclines toward the former – though he knows no parallel for that sense – because the subject of the first clause is “father” and he would have expected wording more like that of line 235, in which (among those people who practice justice) women are said to bear children like their parents. Given the Indo-European antiquity of the forms and notions being expressed in Hesiod’s prophetic description of iron-age social dissolution, the poet’s wording is not problematic. Primitive Indo-European society was patriarchal and patrilineal, with the father enjoying significant familial authority; see, *inter alia*, Benveniste (1969) 205–76. The *Laws of Manu* (3.12–19) set out the unhappy consequences of a noble man marrying a low-born woman and fathering children by her. On the differences between Hesiod’s generations being “a matter of genetic debasement,” see Nagy (1985) §46; see also §43.
- 199 Clay (2003) 161.
- 200 Clay (1993) 116.
- 201 Finley (2002) 90.
- 202 Finley (2002) 93.
- 203 Benveniste (1969) 1:341.
- 204 Benveniste (1969) 1:342. Benveniste further notes that *philoxenos* is “the only compound with *philo-* [in Homer] that has a second term applying to a person.”
- 205 Finley (2002) 92.
- 206 Benveniste (1969) 1:342; Finley (2002) 92.
- 207 With regard to which, see, *inter alia*, Nagy (1996a) 133–4 (with references to earlier work): “When we are dealing with the traditional poetry of the Homeric (and Hesiodic) compositions, it is not justifiable to claim that a passage in any text can refer to another passage in another text. Such a restriction of approaches in Homeric (and Hesiodic) criticism is one of the most important lessons to be learned from the findings of Milman Parry and Albert Lord on the nature of traditional ‘oral’ poetry. . . . There may theoretically be as many variations on a theme as there are compositions. Any theme is but a multiform (that is, a variant), and not one of the multiforms may be considered a functional ‘Urform.’”
- 208 As in *Iliad* 1.179–80. On epic Greek *hetairos*, see, *inter alia*, Heubeck et al. (1988) 384–5.
- 209 West (1978) 200.
- 210 See especially pages 104–8.
- 211 Nagy (1999) 106.
- 212 Nagy references Sinos (1975) 74 = Sinos 1980.
- 213 West (1978) 334–5; Nagy (1990b) 70. Watkins (1995) 14 sees behind these passages “an apparent Indo-European tabu” concerning urinating while standing. For the

- Manu* passages, see the translations in Olivelle (2005) 126–7; Doniger and Smith (1991) 78–9.
- 214 Nagy (1990b) 70. The Sylvain Lévi quote is from Lévi (1966) 121. Nagy continues with observations concerning a “parallel thematic pattern in the *Precepts of Cheiron*,” for which see his pp. 70–71.
- 215 “Enigmatic” to judge by some of its improbable interpretations.
- 216 On which, see Nagy (1990b) 45; see also Nagy (1999) 229–33. On the ugliness of the pot-bellied Aesop, see Compton (2006) 20–21, with references to earlier works; on Compton’s theme of the ugliness of the poet, see his p. 20, n. 12, with references to the development of this theme throughout the work.
- 217 One is reminded of the Irish bard as a “third-function” figure within the first-function “learned class” (consisting of (1) druids, (2) *filid* [or *vates*], and (3) bards); see Rees and Rees (1989) 140–41. On Cridenbél, the gluttonous poet of the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann, see Nagy (1999) 230–31.
- 218 There are, for example, also temporal and calendrical elements involved (aside from the actual agricultural “calendar” of *Works and Days*), which we do not have the luxury of exploring in the present work. I treat these and other issues (some of which were introduced above) in greater detail in a monograph now in preparation: *Hesiod: The Rupture of Time; The Restoration of Order*.

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